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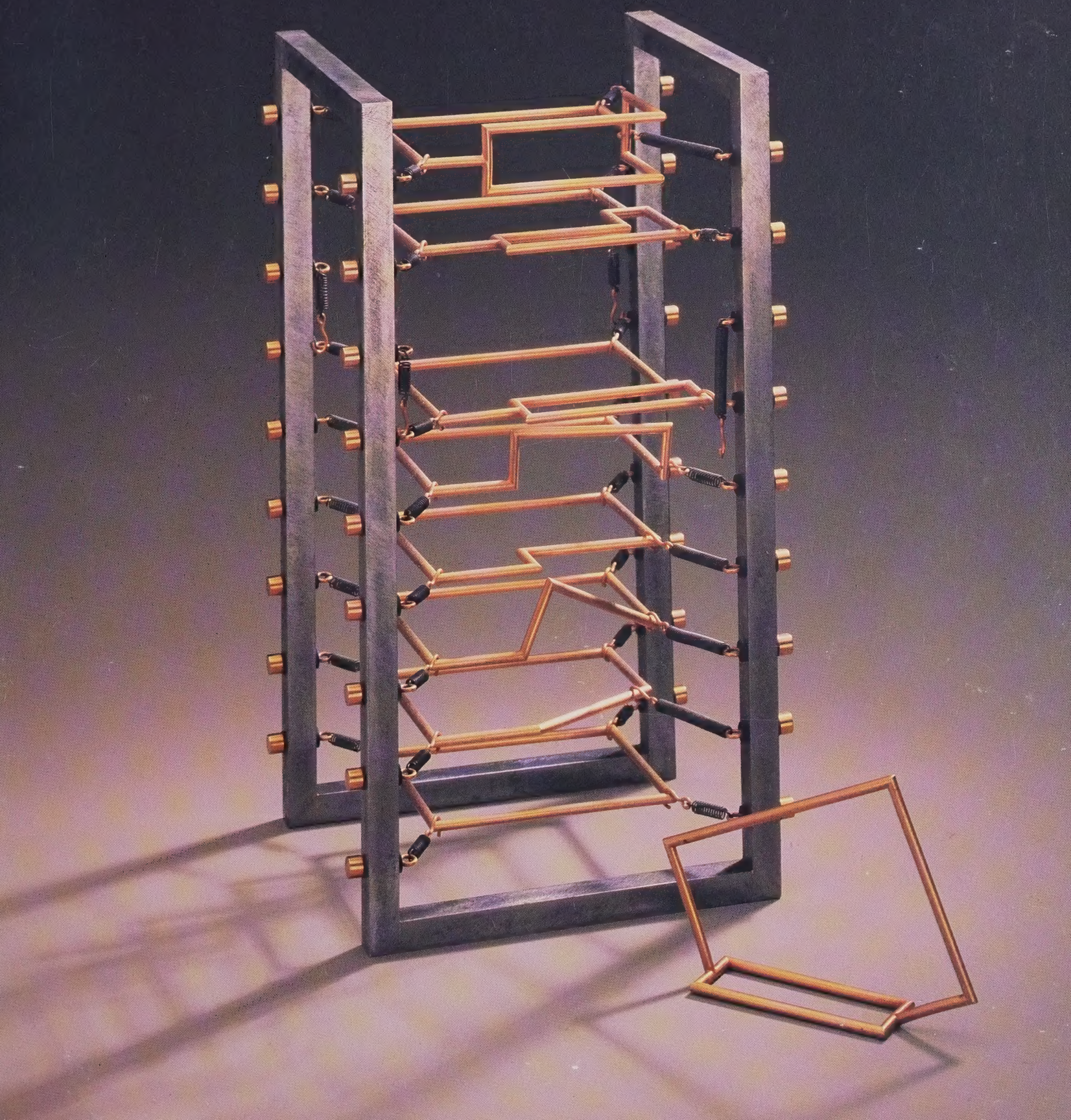
Summer 87

Volume Seven • Number Three • $6



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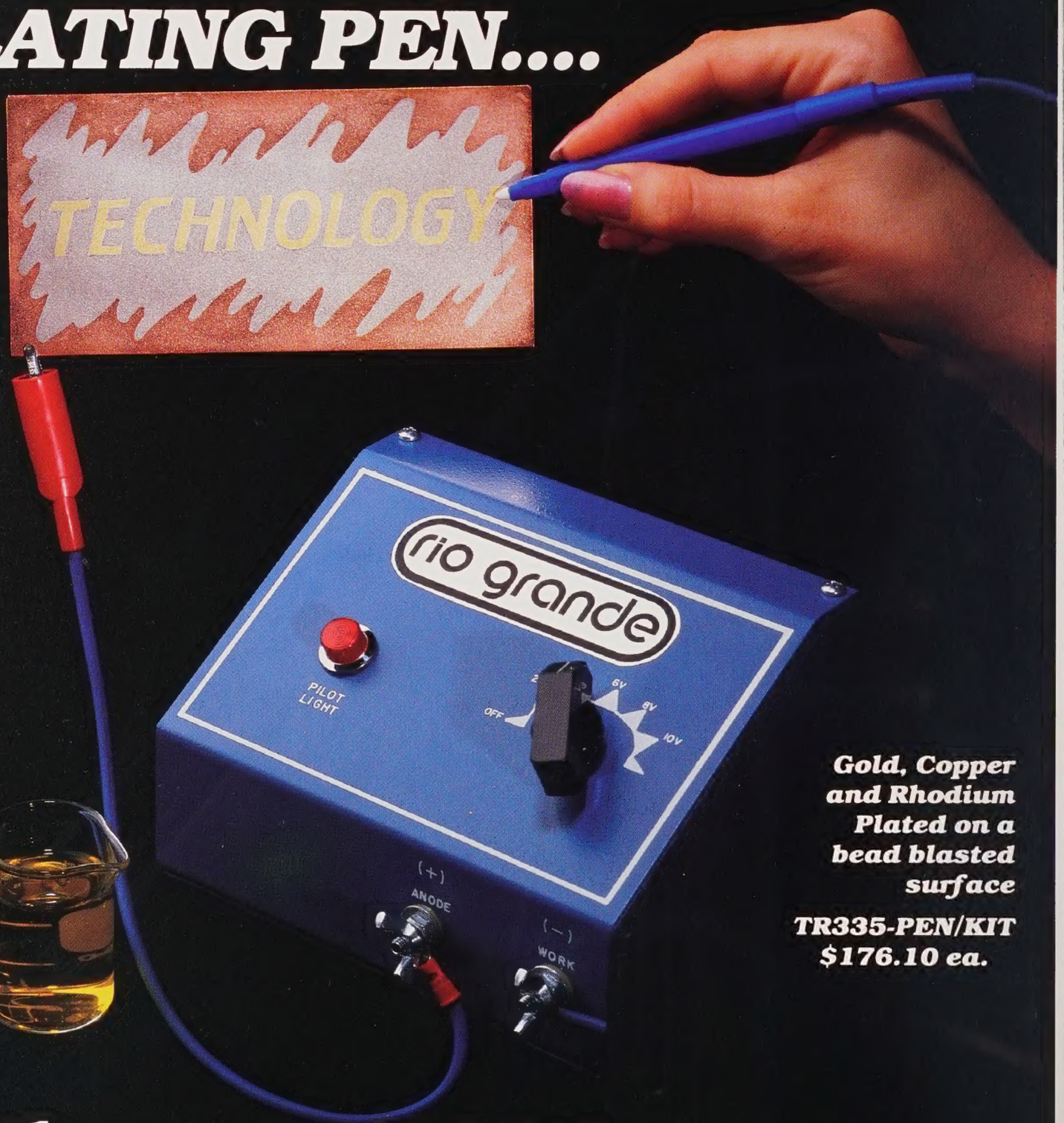

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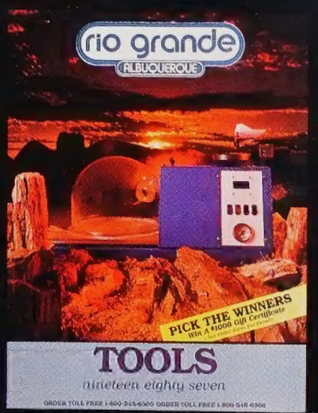

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Summer 87 Volume Seven Number Three

COLUMNS

Editorial 4

Using Your Time Fully
by J. Fred Woell 6

Art and Technics
by Tim McCreight 8

Fads and Fallacies
by A. Stiletto 10

Recent Sightings
by Bruce Metcalf 12

REPORTS

Guest Student in Germany
by Ann Grundler 50

FEATURES

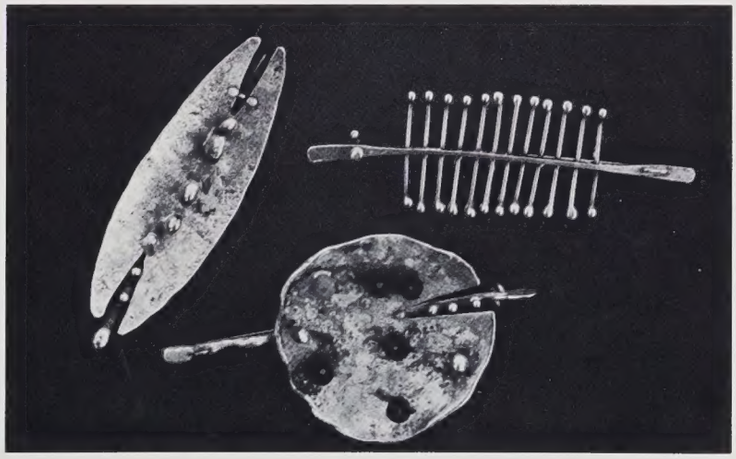
Provocative Performers:
The Intimate Abstractions of Rachelle Thiewes
by Vanessa S. Lynn 14

The Sound and the Surface:
The Metalwork and Jewelry of Harry Bertoia
by Susan J. Montgomery 22

The Jewish Ceremonial Object:
A Contemporary History
by Bernard Bernstein 30

Leslie Leupp:
Exploring the Possibilities
by Elizabeth Skidmore Sasser 38

Damascening/Woven Inlay:
Contemporary Applications of an Ancient Technique
by Bruce Clark 44



REVIEWS

American Craft Today:
Poetry of the Physical
by Michael Dunas 48

1986 International Jewelry Art Exhibition
by Janet Koplos 49

Chung/Margry/Perito
by Desirée Midgett 51

James Barker
by Ann Grundler 51

Contemporary American Metals
by Beverly Penn 52

American Figurative Jewelry
by Komelia H. Okim 53

Contemporary Metals USA
by Carolyn Novin 54

Komelia Hongja Okim
by Dalene Barry 55

New Jersey Arts Annual
by Katherine Wood 56

Metalsmiths of the Midwest
by Albert A. Anderson, Jr. 56

Sei Mobiletti
by Steven Holt 58

Cover: Leslie Leupp, *9 Bracelets in a Series, Suspended*, steel, gold plate, 10x5½x4", 1980. Photo: Robert Suddarth **top:** Leslie Leupp, *Frivolous Vitality Bracelet*, steel, plastic, aluminum, linoleum, formica, 3½x5x3", 1984. Photo: Robert Suddarth. See page 38 **above:** Harry Bertoia, *Three Brooches*, silver, c. 1942, 3½" l. Collection: Mrs. Brigitta Bertoia. Photo: Karl Bungerz. See page 22

Nature of Materials

You see and feel the sound before you hear it. A wrapped mallet striking tall thick rails, the vibrations pass through the floor and your feet. As the crescendo of sound erupts in the room, you feel it in your stomach. By now she is on to other pieces, tweeking the top of clustered wires, gathering and releasing bars. With a rubber-tipped wand she scratches a gong, which responds with a reverberating moan.

The musician, conductor and composer is Brigitta Valentiner Bertoia, a painter and writer and wife of deceased sculptor Harry Bertoia. The concert hall is a timber and masonry barn on the Bertoia farm in southeastern Pennsylvania. The instruments are sculpture, pieces Harry executed between 1960 and 1975, collectively called Sounding Pieces.

The above is metalsmith Karl Bungerz's reaction to an exceptional experience we shared while visiting the Bertoia Studio and Mrs. Bertoia's home last winter. The chilly interior of the old barn was magically transformed into a mellifluous cathedral of sound as Mrs. Bertoia delicately yet systematically made the rounds of the clusters of metal reeds and cattails that are her husband's sounding sculptures.

In this work Bertoia looked beyond the use of metal as a manipulative medium to a focus on an intrinsic value of the material—sound—that transcends its form and physical manifestations, its preciousness and malleability.

Throughout history there have been sounding metal sculptures. Bells, chimes, organ pipes, cymbals, triangles, jew's harps, steel guitars are examples of metal's use to make sounds, instruments to make music. But musical instruments are more than devices for making sound. The esthetic properties of their forms are enhanced by the sounds they emit. Conversely, Bertoia contrived a sculpture to be heard that was enhanced by its physical form.

The attraction of metal for its unique sound properties is not new. Metal sounds can be loud and resonant—the old chuck wagon dinner triangle—or discreet and tinkling—the hostess bell to call the butler. A sounding piece requires an end user to perform it. For example, an instrument maker might create the ultimate cello as an esthetic object, but that object is not the end result of the process. To fulfill the object's function requires a cellist—to play it to its full potential requires a Rostopovich. In so entrusting his work to a musician, the instrument maker relinquishes control of the object not only to the performance but also to the potential ascendency of music over the physical object itself.

While many metalsmiths and jewelers seem to have a strong affinity for music—most benches in graduate studios house as many tapes as tools—there are not many sounding pieces around. It is curious that so few works of metal use sound as a complement when this property is evident and when the maker is so clearly disposed to its appreciation.

Perhaps the hesitancy to capitalize on metal's sound potential is due to the very possibility that aural effects will overpower visual effects—in fact, ironically, Harry Bertoia's sounding sculpture symphony has been recorded on a long-playing album.

Jewelry is often worn loosely on the body and sounds naturally. My aunt used to wear an elaborate charm bracelet with moveable parts—a twirling Tour Eiffel, a tolling bell inside a tiny minaret, a loose-legged Greek dancer—and the jingling of this bracelet would announce her arrival in the room in grand fashion. This bracelet was her own creation—but rarely today are these mellifluous sounds taken into account by jewelry makers.

In this issue, Vanessa Lynn profiles jeweler Rachelle Thiewes, who does consider sound an integral part of her work. In writing about Thiewes's earrings, Vanessa notes, "Seemingly at random, when motion instigates, parallel clusters of disks occasionally 'kiss,' producing a 'ting.' It is high-pitched and pleasant to the ear, yet so low in decibel that it can be known only to the wearer." Thiewes makes pieces that release metal sound in an intimate, almost secretive way. She takes into consideration that for the jewelry to make sounds, someone must activate it. The earrings make the ear ring only in the wearing. Her *Bengal* bangles jangle only when shaken. In relinquishing some of the meaning of the work to the performance of the wearer, Thiewes is making a subtle statement about the nature of the material.

Rachelle Thiewes is among the few who make sensitive use of the sounds of metal. While metalsmiths may experience ear-shattering sounds in the process of making a piece, contemporary work is more often than not mute in its final form.

—SB

Metalsmith

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Designer/Tito Saubidet
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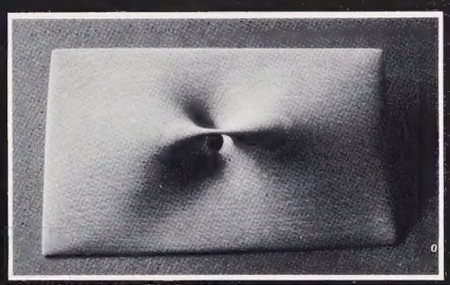
Helen Shirk, Vessel CBV30E, copper, patina, prismacolor.



Pavel Opocensky, Pin, ivory.

PAVEL OPOCENSKY
REBEKAH LASKIN
JULY 1–30

SANDRA ENTERLINE
JOE WOOD
AUGUST 7–31

Sandra Enterline, Brooch, oxidized sterling.

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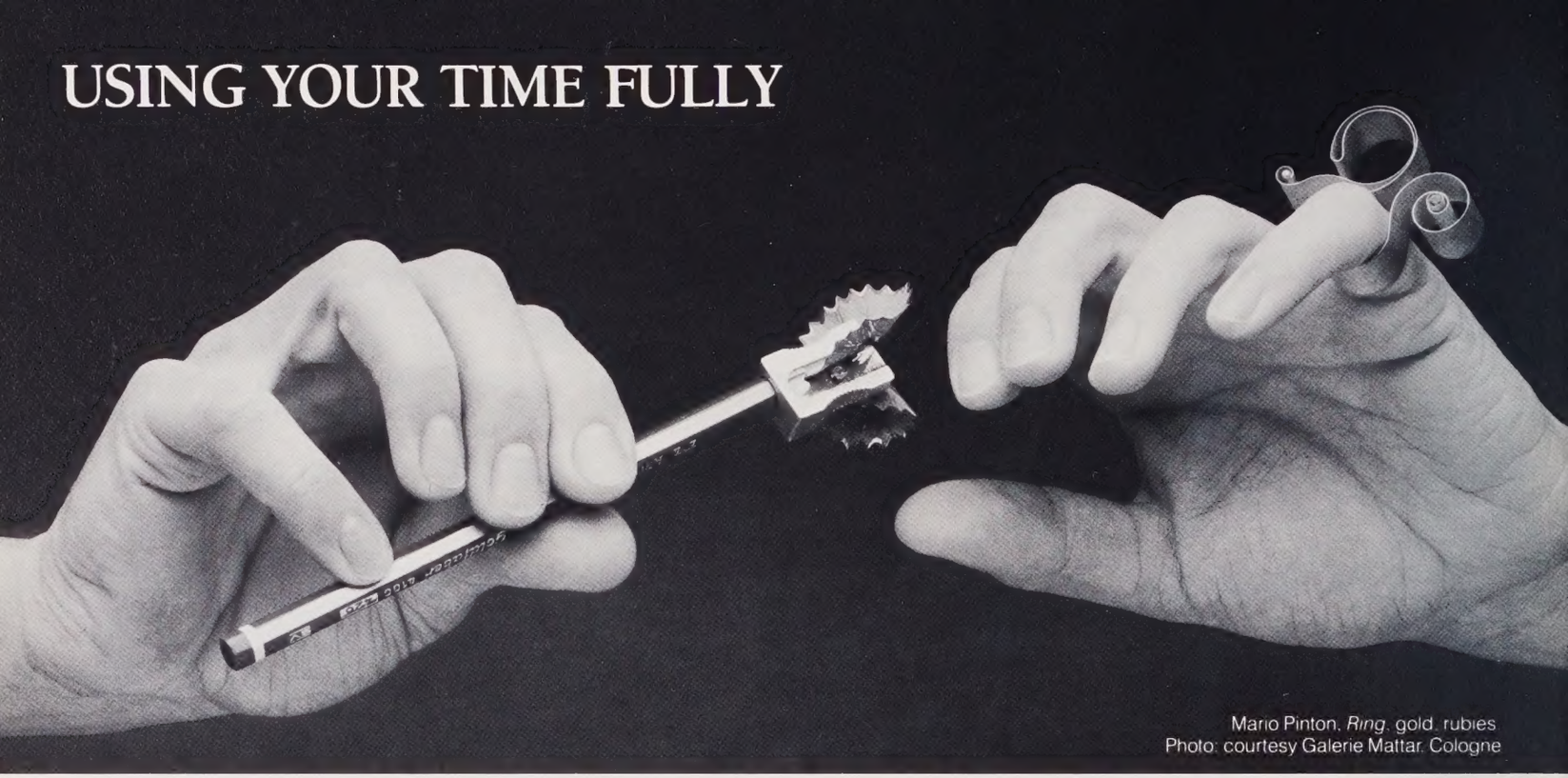
USING YOUR TIME FULLY



Mario Pinton, *Ring*, gold, rubies
Photo: courtesy Galerie Mattar, Cologne

by J. Fred Woell

At the beginning of each day organize your thoughts; *write them down if that helps:*

1. All the things you want to do.

2. All the things you MUST do.

3. What needs to be done first. (Don't start on things that don't need to be done now or possibly ever.)

4. Begin working on that project. If the project is so big that it will take you more than a few hours to complete, break up the project into its individual aspects and try to finish one of the necessary steps on it. *Don't try to do more than is physically and mentally possible in the time you have available to you.* Don't put off working on projects that demand a lot of creative thinking until late in the day or night: You'll be tired. Attack such problems and creative thinking when you are fresh and rested.

Always try to understand, that you are your own best enemy. Be nice to yourself when tackling the unknown. Realize that you are going to fail a lot before you are going to succeed. ALLOW TIME FOR THIS FAILING TO HAPPEN. Creative work is not mechanical. It deals with your subconscious, your view of yourself and your emotions. If you're at odds with your boy or girlfriend, and you are depressed—DON'T DO CREATIVE WORK. Do mechanical, non-reasoning, unemotional work, such as: Cleaning-up and reorganizing your bench (it probably needs it!). Getting your materials ready to work with (rolling metal to a proper gauge, annealing it, pickling and cleaning it). *Don't start cutting into precious metals or working on an aspect of a piece where critical alignment or difficult solder joints are the task when you are tired or under emotional stress.* UNDERSTAND WHAT IS STRESSFUL TO YOU IN THE CREATIVE PROCESS AND IN THE MECHANICAL PROCESS AND DO THESE THINGS WHEN YOU ARE FEELING GOOD ABOUT YOURSELF, FEELING RESTED AND THINGS ARE NATURALLY GOING WELL.

A "key" word in the work process is *FOCUS.* Learn to focus on what you are doing. A helpful beginning to the process of focusing is organizing your work space. Sit down in that space and think about all the multifaceted things you will do there. Realize that these work activities must overlap, so arrange them according to which ones you'll do most often, down to least often. As you begin working in that space continue to improve its efficiency. Moving the torch rest 2″ might improve your comfort and give you more bench-top space. Study yourself: how you work best; height of chair; best places to hang tools of importance, etc. (If tools naturally go back onto their racks or into their drawers you've organized them correctly. If tools end up lost under piles of everything else, and it takes unnecessary time to find them, you need to reorganize. *Losing and finding tools and parts for creative work can frustrate and tire you out:* It can ruin your day.

Learn to FOCUS on your work. Try to block out other thoughts on other things when working. "Will he ask you out this weekend?" or "Will she go to the party with me?" are probably foremost on your mind, but the key to productivity is to develop the means and systematic methods to put things into their places, and tend to them when they occur, and not just wish your time away. LEARN TO COMPARTMENTALIZE!

One way to deal with this is to write down in a journal what you might say to him or her when and if the great moment happens. ANY THOUGHTS THAT KEEP NAGGING AT YOU —WRITE DOWN! Stop work completely and WRITE them *completely.* The same is true of creative thoughts. Get them into some kind of journal (sketchbook), whatever. This means words, simple line diagrams or any aspect of what is going through your mind about your work. It's important to show more than one view of even the smallest detail. This will help you get the confusion out of your head into some visible form. It also gets it out of your head! Where it's been bothering you.

Set-up a personal timetable for the semester and understand it! Break up the semester down to days, weeks, months. You'll be surprised just how little time there is to work. DO IT NOW! Don't put it off until the semester is almost over.

SET ASIDE TIME FOR YOURSELF! Make sure you get time to rest and play. ALL WORK AND NO PLAY WILL DESTROY YOU!

Drum into your mind that THINGS ARE BOUND TO GO WRONG, at least at some point, and prepare yourself mentally for how you will handle it.

When things do start going wrong . . . assess the situation and yourself:

Are they going wrong because:

1. I'm too tired?

2. I'm dealing with techniques or materials that are new to me, and I haven't developed enough skill yet to do them successfully?

3. I'm rushing too fast and trying to accomplish too much in too short a time?

4. I'm upset, angry, nervous about something that is making me make mistakes? . . . .

In your assessment of why things are going wrong; *get away from your workbench or where you are working to a quiet spot for a few moments by yourself to think.* Do not try to assess your situation in the midst of the disaster. Just looking at the mistake you've made will depress you more and heighten your anxiety and make you more likely to make further mistakes.

In this quiet spot consider:

1. Should I try to finish what I've just failed at?

2. Should I start to finish another thing or aspect of the work I know I can do without problems?

3. Should I quit and start again tomorrow?

AND FINALLY remember through it all:

1. "An essential aspect of creativity is not being afraid to fail." —Dr. Edwin Land (inventor of Polaroid)

2. This IS hard work: There IS NOT some *trick* to just make it suddenly all fall together like magic!

3. This is NOT end of the world!

4. Tomorrow will be different. Maybe not better, but different.

5. You DO have people around you who CARE, who are also struggling are INTERESTED, and are there to TRY to help!

J. Fred Woell is a metalsmith living on Deer Isle, Maine who teaches at the Swain School of Design.

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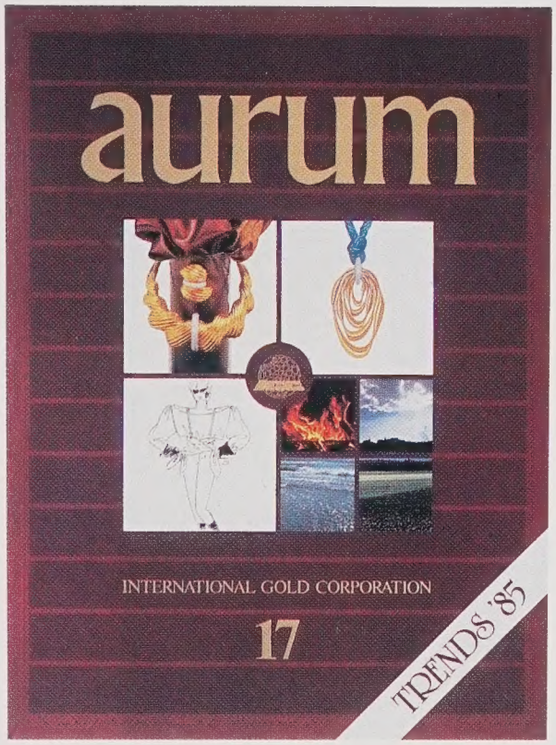

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INTERGOLD

Art and Technics

by Tim McCreight

Often the paramount achievement of technical mastery is the ability to "remain invisible." The virtuoso violinist is heralded less for his pyrotechnic fingering than his subtle grace in purifying each note within a seamless composition. It is the music we hear, rather than the musician. When I first saw Barbara Heinrich's pin, shown here, I had this same sense of "invisible" mastery.

Barbara's pin is a disk about an inch and a half across, made of 18k gold and set with about a dozen small diamonds. The subtle surface glistens with a symphony of textures and shapes in relief, vaguely symbolic without being directly representational. My first response was a desire to touch the piece. Rarely can the hard edges of cut stones and polished gold incur a tacit appearance of "softness"

The first step in creating this effect was to establish a subtly irregular surface by rolling the gold through a mill between sheets of paper. After annealing, the sheet was rolled again, this time against a template of brass that had been prepared by piercing. The result was a sheet metal with low relief areas. A circle was drawn freehand and cut out; then the edges were thickened by upsetting them with a light cross-peen hammer.

When location of the diamonds was determined, small holes were drilled. Disks of gold were soldered onto the back of the sheet to provide extra thickness for these areas; then the holes were enlarged and shaped to receive the stones. The diamonds were secured with a burnisher, which was also used to brighten the high areas of the relief and the thickened edge.

This piece is ultimately "approachable" as the care of workmanship and control of glitter seduces both the knowledgeable jeweler an the uninitiated layman. At the same time, the viewer is comfortable with the piece; nowhere is the hand of the maker awkward or threatening. The delicate composition forces us to lean closer, inviting us to enjoy the sparkle. If the pin could make noise it would be the gentle tinkling of wind chimes. It speaks with a gentle timbre.

Barbara claims that "this pin provides a place for the spirit to relax and be nurtured." It is this clear sense of an intended effect that allows the technical quality to accomplish its function so gracefully. By focusing on the soothing mood she is trying to create, the artist is able to allow the technique to operate with quiet confidence, always secondary to the resultant esthetic.

Barbara Heinrich, *Brooch*, 18k gold, diamonds

Tim McCreight is a working craftsman and teacher at the Worcester Craft Center. He is a contributing editor to Metalsmith.

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As trite as it might sound, we still form our opinions about people as a result of "first impressions." In fact, our fast-paced culture demands that personal images be codified within the limits of an ever-decreasing attention span. For all but our most intimate friends and family, we depend on superficial appearance to carry the weight of character and personality. Inevitably, then, our body becomes conditioned to behave and act in front of a human audience employing the gestures and postures of a common language to signal our participation in interpersonal relationships.

The theater metaphor is no coincidence, as actors essentially mimic human behavior in order to illuminate the complexity of commonplace actions. Conversely, the presentation of self in everyday life requires that we adopt theatrical codes in the form of dress, makeup, props, etc. that augment and often substitute for our verbal language. Seen in this light, jewelry maintains more than a tangential relationship to acting and costume as conscribed with a "staged" scenario.

Unfortunately, when we speak of costume jewelry, we generally mean jewels made of nonprecious materials, fakes, novelties, a throwaway esthetic. This pejorative definition, like so many applied to jewelry, dissolves as novelty techniques and nonprecious materials are more often successfully incorporated in what we know as fine, fashion and art jewelry. Anyway, such strict definitions, based on market applications, seem only to obfuscate the language that all jewelry shares with theater in the disguise of the masked persona.

Costume in the strict sense is a special "staged" outfit that is easily recognizable by its symbolic or historical codes. Costume idealizes the wearer in the guise of someone else. We instantly recognize an actress as Queen Victoria when she dons a gilded crown, even though we are still aware that she is playing a part. Even when an actress is not playing the part of a specific historical or fictional character, the costume might signal a separate identity. Cher, for example, utilizes her glittering, bejewelled costumes to conjure an image of "stardom," a fantasy image conveyed by the costume but conferred upon Cher because she wears it. Consquently, the enormous power of projection in celebrity photos, films and especially television has transformed fine or fashion jewelry into costume jewelry. When we see the characters in the soaps like "Dallas" and "Dynasty" wearing jewelry, our adulation for the "stars" transfers to the jewelry. It is not the jewelry we identify with but the code of the jewelry communicated by the actor's role. The jewelry is not appreciated for its intrinsic merits, but as a conduit for recognizable character traits that are assumed and fictional. In all cases, costume maintains a self-referential code that is distinct and separate from the wearer's personality.

In contrast, clothing, jewelry and other props can be used for purely dramatic effects, transforming the actor completely. While costume does not eliminate our cognizance of the actor, the actor and his role remains separate but complementary. The use of a scarf, a pocket watch, a top hat may force an actor to surface an inherent character that is part of his own personality. Fred Astaire, the debonair bon vivant is inseparable from his top hat and tails,

Above: Kay Perper's necklace of multicolored plastic beads, copper formed center with multicolored faux gemstones; shell earrings painted in red with gold stripes; cuff bracelet in brass and signet ring of 24k gold plate over silver; **below:** shell necklace with undercover of glitter, black paint; shell earrings painted black with gold stripes; domed ring, electroplated in 24k gold over silver. Photo: Dave Safian; model: Catrina Genovese. At 86, Kay Perper, with a background of travel and dance, is embarking on a new career of designing imaginative contemporary jewelry. An exhibition of her work was held recently at the Donnell Branch of the New York Public Library in Manhattan

as is Charlie Chaplin, the tramp, from his ill-fitting baggies, derby and peripatetic cane. We recognize that the tramp and the bon vivant are sublimated in the personalities of Chaplin and Astaire. The top hat, tails, derby and cane take on an added significance when employed by Chaplin and Astaire. More importantly, Astaire and Chaplin evince a specific and empathetic identity that we associate more with the traits and gestures of their personalities than those of the costume. Rather than the costume sublimating the actor, in this case, the costume is sublimated by the actor.

This difference is important when we consider the theatrical "borrowings" of fashion. Unafraid of being disguised by clothing and jewelry, the wearer can maintain the distinction between himself and his costume. However, we rarely see the appearance of dramatic jewelry, jewelry that transforms the wearer, exposing various persona that might be at odds with his quotidian image. Fashion often borrows from the staged outfit, modifying it slightly so as not to appear literal, not to threaten the personality of the wearer. For example, we might wear a motorcycle jacket to identify with James Dean or Ray Ban sunglasses to identify with Don Johnson without being conspicuously "in costume," yet we do not seek those idiosyncratic props to transform the rebel within us nor the tramp or bon vivant for that matter. We are too afraid of being vulnerable, of removing the facade that the costume offers as a defense against dramatic impulses. The rare occasions when dramatic jewelry is sanctioned are the "ball" or "club party" and other contrived staged events where theater is required and where the catharsis of acting is encouraged. These have become the havens for entertaining "who we would like to be" rather than agonizing over "who we really are."

This concern for our real personality as understood within a social code is the perogative of fashion. Its tradition derives from the public arena rather than the proscenium stage. Fashion's goal is to find a place for us in the social mise-en-scene through clothes and jewelry, either comfortably blending in or distinguishing ourselves, depending upon our inclinations. Historically, fashion signaled the nobility of social class (i.e., the use of luxury materials and precious jewels). As fashion became democratized, as the public arena became open to all social classes, new codes were needed. No longer was the display of status confined to the privileged; anyone could participate in the ritual by simulating an acceptable image. Power shifted to tastemakers, style innovators and new social icons like movie stars. Power shifted away from wealth and status and toward the codified image of celebrity. The dynamics of the code remains the same, as it is arbitrary and fictional, only seeking to assimilate a larger public into the structure of social interaction. Instead of looking to nobility as our measure, we look to the covers of the fashion press, the trendsetting designers, the mysterious arbiters of style who speak in whispers of what's in and what's not. Even the ostentatious finery, bombastic colors and outrageous forms that we identify as punk, subversive, cheap "street jewelry" that is far removed from notions of elegance and class is nothing more than another code recently legitimized.

The authority of fashion as a visual convention is gladly accepted by everyone, yet we go to great pains in distinguishing it from theatrical costume. We believe that the street is the arena of reality not illusion. In looking at fashion, the pleasure of recognition is more satisfying than the pleasure of perceiving dramatic coherence or staged appropriation. In liberating jewelry from convention, maybe we should examine more closely its efficacy as costume and its catalytic role in body drama.

I want to credit the pioneering work of Anne Hollander for inspiring and informing this column.

A. Stiletto works in and around New York and writes a regular column on fashion.

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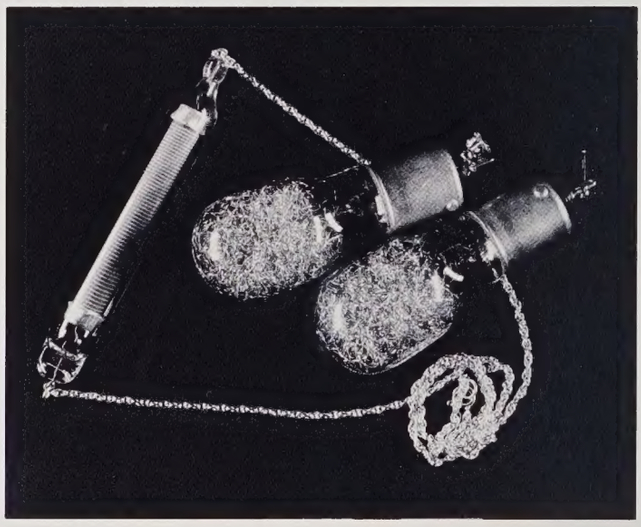

Allison Stern,
Flash Bulb Earrings, Cathode Tube Pendant.
Photo: courtesy Gallery 91, NYC

by Bruce Metcalf

Seeking a definition is more than an academic exercise. One hopes that the process of defining will shed new light on the subject at hand. Unfortunately, while it's possible to define carbon or oxygen with some precision, terms in the visual arts defy accurate elucidation. Critics and theorists have been arguing for centuries about the meaning of "painting" or "sculpture," and the resolutions of one generation disintegrate as the next one examines the question.

In the "New American Jewelry" class last summer at Kent State, we attempted to define what we know as jewelry. Instead of resolving the term in a single sentence, we arrived at a list of seven functions that circumscribe the field.

First: Jewelry is traditionally made to be attached to the body, as in rings, bracelets, necklaces, headdresses, etc. Other types of jewelry are attached to garments, as in pins, penanrular brooches and buttons. Some varieties demand alteration of the body, as in earrings for pierced ears and lip plugs. Although there are other types of jewelry (hairpins, combs, barrettes, pasties, etc.) they all maintain a physical relationship to the human form. (The line between garments and jewelry is vague: certainly garments can be metal chainmail and jewelry can be made of fiber. Similarly, the scale and enveloping quality of garments has become the territory of jewelers: Susanna Heron's "hats" and Caroline Broadhead's veils come to mind.)

Second: Jewelry has always been used as decoration, an adornment that provides visual accents and texture and focuses attention on particular parts of the body. But the urge to decorate satisfies psychological motives as well: it beautifies and on occasion renders the wearer socially or sexually desirable. On the body, decoration always has a subtext. One cannot underestimate the power of jewelry to enhance self-image and to alter social perceptions. The purpose of jewelry is, in part, a subtle control of the coded message that every person imparts.

Third: In many traditional cultures, jewelry serves as a redeemable investment. Women the world over wear a substantial portion of their wealth in jewelry, which can be converted into goods and services as the need arises. (Perhaps jewelry also functioned as life-insurance policies: in the event of the death of a husband in a patriarchal society, the wife still had wealth to guarantee her family's survival.)

Fourth: Jewelry always has been associated with the spiritual and the supernatural. Amulets and talismans appear in every culture, offering magical protection and powers to the wearer. Sacred symbols are frequently made wearable, the crucifix and the Star of David are two familiar examples. The intimate contact between symbol and body becomes a constant reminder of one's faith and the promise of security and protection. The mystical overtones of jewelry are very attractive to Americans—William Harper's talismanic brooches, for example.

Fifth: Another important function of jewelry has been to mark social identity and status. Adornment has historically been used to either distinguish or merge the various social groups. Military insignias do both; for instance, the bars a captain wears identify him as belonging to a particular service (the same as any other soldier) but also identify a particular rank (the difference between a captain and general). Large diamonds on rings announce that the wearer is wealthy; razor blades hung around the neck announce the wearer is a late-blooming punk. The diamond ring worn at the country club indicates conformity and calls for acceptance, but the same ring worn in a punk bar might be asking for trouble. In every case, jewelry is a marker, communicating in a subtle code that members of the same culture recognize instantly and intuitively.

Each of these functions defines jewelry to some extent. Most jewelry fulfills several functions simultaneously, setting up a layering of use and meaning that is sometimes confusing, even contradictory. All of these uses operate in Western society today, every bit as much as they operate in preliterate societies. In spite of all our technical sophistication, people still use jewelry for much the same reasons as the most "primitive" of African tribesmen.

Sixth: Another historical constant is the astonishingly wide range of material employed for jewelry. The Western European view that metal is the medium of choice for adornment is rather narrow. Even in the European tradition, stone, wood, beads, leather, glass and even human hair have been employed for jewelry making. A cursory study of non-Western cultures shows an even wider range: feathers, horn, lacquer, clay, cloth, straw and hundreds of other materials are used in adornment. The rebel jewelers of the early 1980s who disdained metal shocked only those who disavowed the pan-cultural history of jewelry.

Seventh: I perceive a criteria for jewelry that is comparatively new and profoundly influenced by 20th-century art. A number of jewelers see their products as having an imaginative function beyond a physical one. In this case, jewelry might attach to the body or occupy space near the body but is clearly not for everyday use. This work is analogous to a pot without a bottom, alluding to function without being functional. In this sense, Ron Nagle's pots and Peter Voulkos's plates are similar to Marjorie Schick's wooden neckpieces. Jewelers are starting to use adornment as a vehicle for artistic issues. Jewelry has become a device for personal expression and conceptual exploration. The subject might be formalism (Emmy Van Leersum), social critique (Otto Kunzli), craftsmanship (John Paul Miller) or the limits of adornment (Pierre Degen), but in each case jewelry becomes a platform for the artist's agenda. This development seems to be unique to the industrialized West and reflects the art world's current bias towards the conceptual.

Although jewelry overlaps sculpture on one side and garments on the other, the ultimate question for each jeweler is: "What do you wish to communicate?" I hope that a close examination of the seven functions I have described will make us all more aware of the rich potential of adornment and give us a clearer definition of both our ends and our means.

Thanks to the Blossom students for their contributions to these ideas: Ann Ackerman, Holly Churchill, Joy Eidam, Jill Forsman, Brian Gugino, Don Herman, Deborah Jones, Nancy Kaparic, Jack Kinkelaar, Kathy Luker, Helen Moseley, Gail Schoenberg, Suzanne Stokes and Susan Wakefield.

Bruce Metcalf teaches at Kent State and is a contributing editor to Metalsmith.

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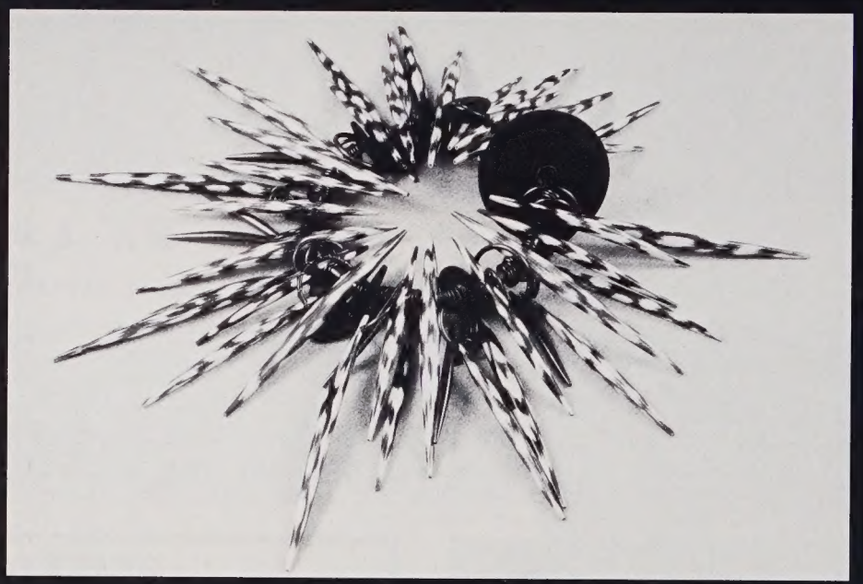
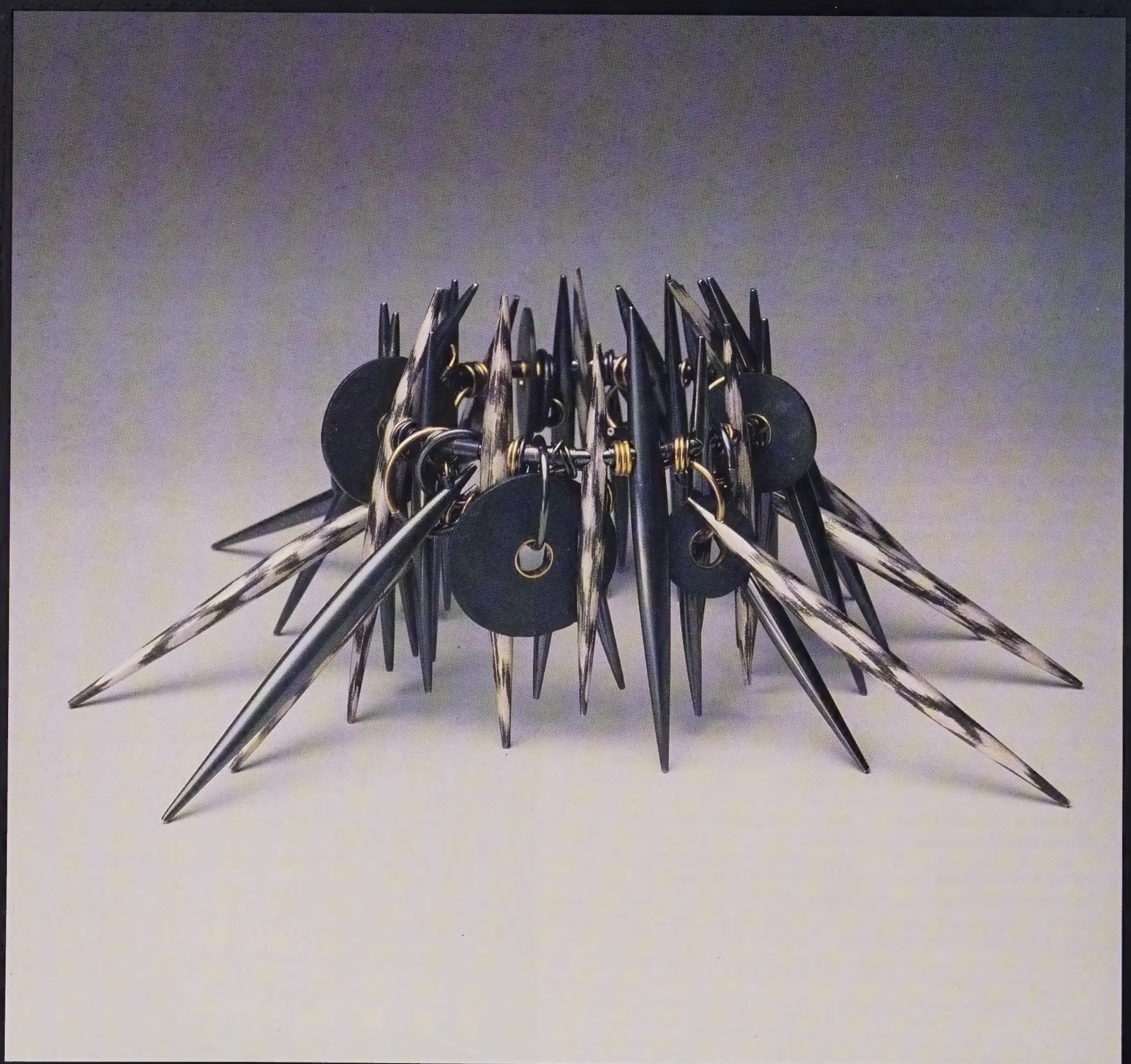




PROVOCATIVE PERFORMERS

THE INTIMATE ABSTRACTIONS OF RACHELLE THIEWES

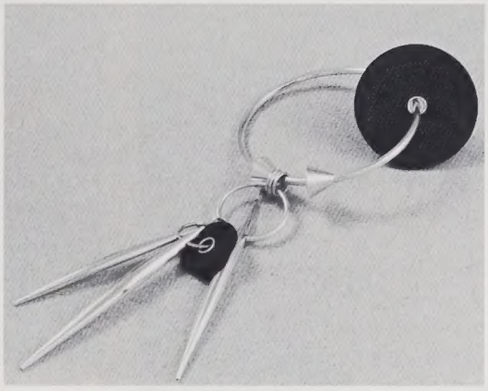
by Vanessa S. Lynn

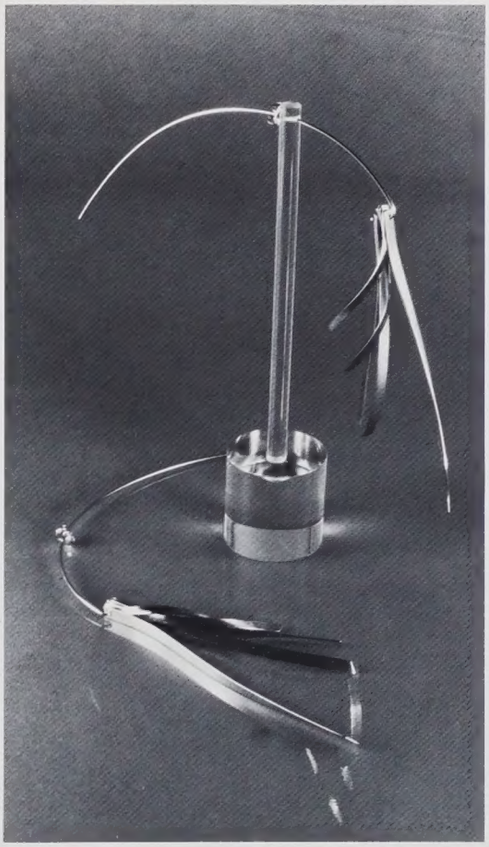
The third week of October was, ostensibly, a week like any other. But in the art world, it was a wild week of almost deafening hype. There was coverage of the tedious back-patting that surrounded the opening of the new American Craft Museum. Concurrently, though widely unnoticed by the craft crowd, the art press was buzzing over the Sonnabend Gallery, which had piqued interest by showcasing four East Village artists, all under the age of 35. These four had successfully sold themselves as a single entity to the most prestigious bidder and held at bay potential clients until the exhibition closed, at which time gallery and artists together would decide who was worthy of owning what! And then there was the long-awaited *New Yorker* profile of *Artforum* editor Ingrid Sischy, which hit the stands sizzling with lurid tales of backbiting and acrimonious rumor.

Against this background of madness and mayhem, I prepared to interview Rachelle Thiewes, who came East from El Paso, Texas, to take part in the American Craft Museum's inaugural festivities. Throughout our sessions, Rachelle Thiewes emerged as a refreshing counterpoint to the publicity-hungry art world, an artist fully committed to finding and expressing her own voice. The manifestation of this commitment appears in virtually all her work as a unity of intention and form that could not exist if the artist allowed trends and tastes to interfere with that inner voice.

Rachelle Thiewes's early years were spent in the expansive landscape of the Midwest. She was born in Minnesota, grew up and attended college in Illinois and received an M.F.A. in metals from Kent State University in 1976. She moved to El Paso to accept a position as Instructor of Metals/Design that same year and has remained there, moving through the academic ranks to Associate Professor of Art in 1983.

Rachelle Thiewes realized remarkably early, during graduate school, that she was interested in addressing three major concerns: She is inextricably bound to refining pure formal integrity. She is also involved with the construction of form that "is to be applied and worn as an extension of one's physical self"; and, finally, she is intent on incorporating line and light to provide a whispered embellishment to her minimalist form. In addition, various themes seem to appear throughout her development, despite their absence in her formal agenda, specifically the use of movement to effect a musical quality in her pieces and an omnipresent sexual reference. What emerges is a sense that the artist's single most informing concern is a commitment to jewelry as theatrical statement.



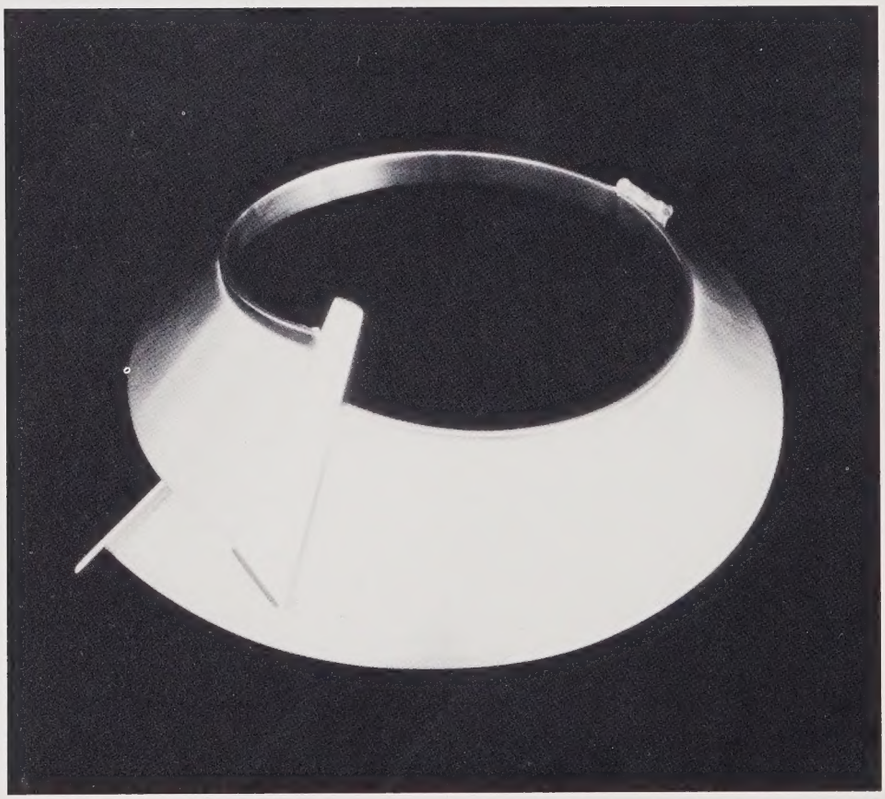


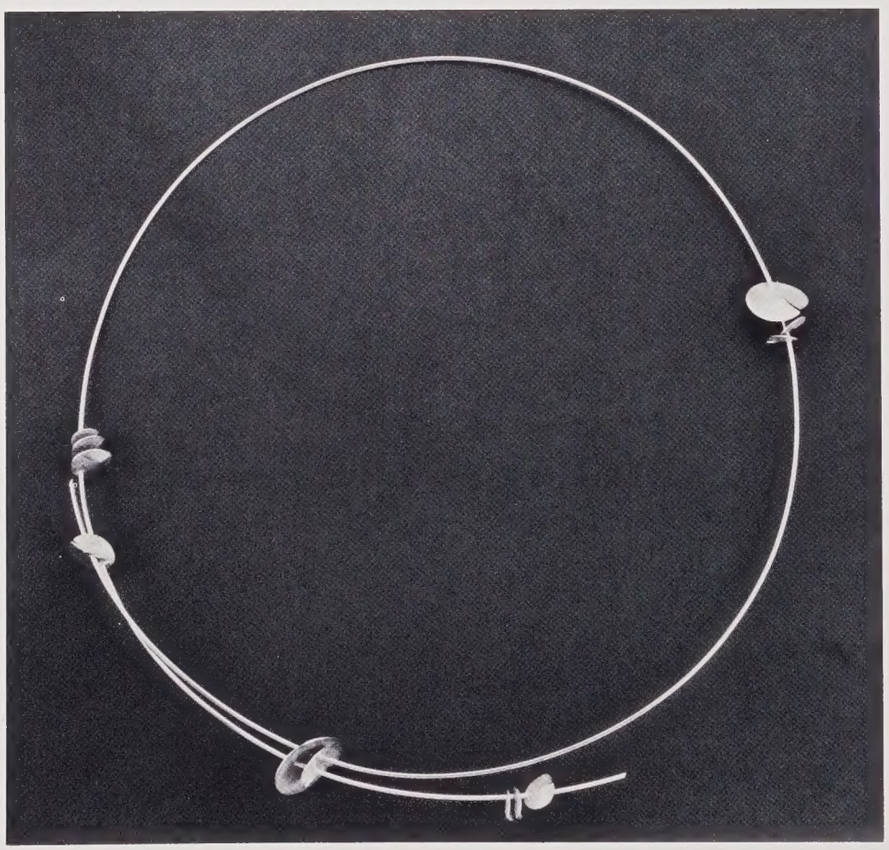
Opposite page: *Bengal II Bracelet*, silver, carved slate, chemical and heat coloring; **top:** view when laid flat, 9" d., 1986; **this page, top:** *Untitled Bracelet*, silver wire, gold, slate, 2¾" d., 1984; **above:** *Earrings*, 1982

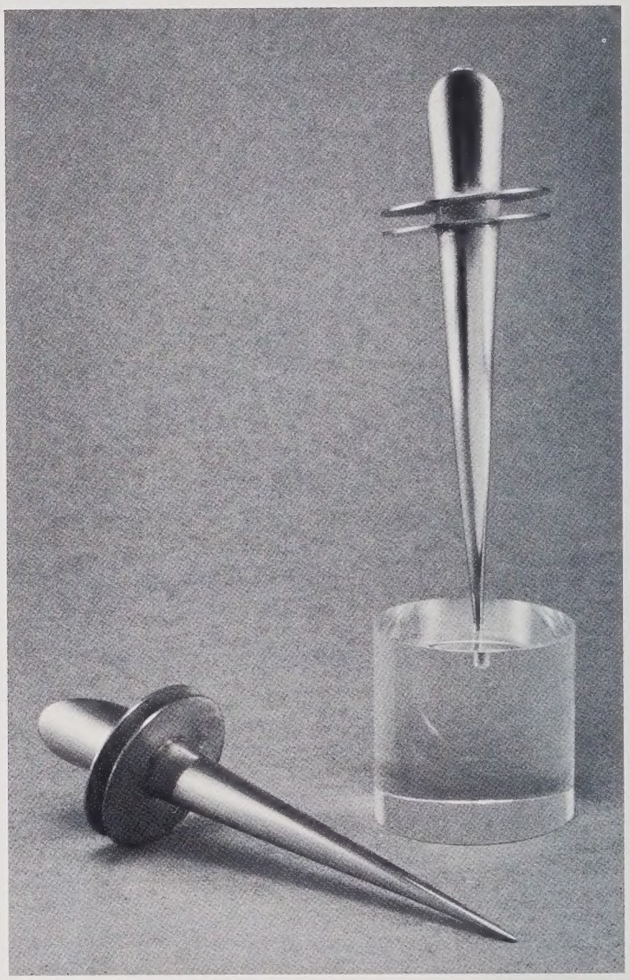
Untitled Bracelet, completed in 1984, reveals almost every element of Thiewes's style, and thus will serve to illustrate the unity of her intentions. A highly abstract "charm bracelet," it maintains a thin support structure, 2¾" in diameter, wire or wirelike in relation to its coelements, playing host to a series of the most simple geometric repetitions that dangle from a small circle. Two slate disks with silver-edged center holes echo the circular bracelet support, as do various sized circles of silver and gold. Silver cones that slide along the main ring mimic the theme of circular repetition. The multiplication of an elongated, tapering tube, or spiculum, complements the basic construction. Thiewes opts to compound her design task by introducing a kinetic element, activated by either the wearer's movement or gravity. The bracelet appears to be a simple composition of geometric elements. But those simple parts are a vehicle for realizing a desire to create formally resolved work. This configuration though functional has mastered the language of modern sculpture: line, space, structure and subtle texture combine to produce a totally resolved statement. This is accomplished through her extraordinary understanding of proportion. It is always the relationship of circle to line, line to mass, mass to light that is responsible for the formal success of her work. The formal success of this piece is so complete that its "bracelethood" can be ignored. What is arrived at is pure kinetic sculpture.

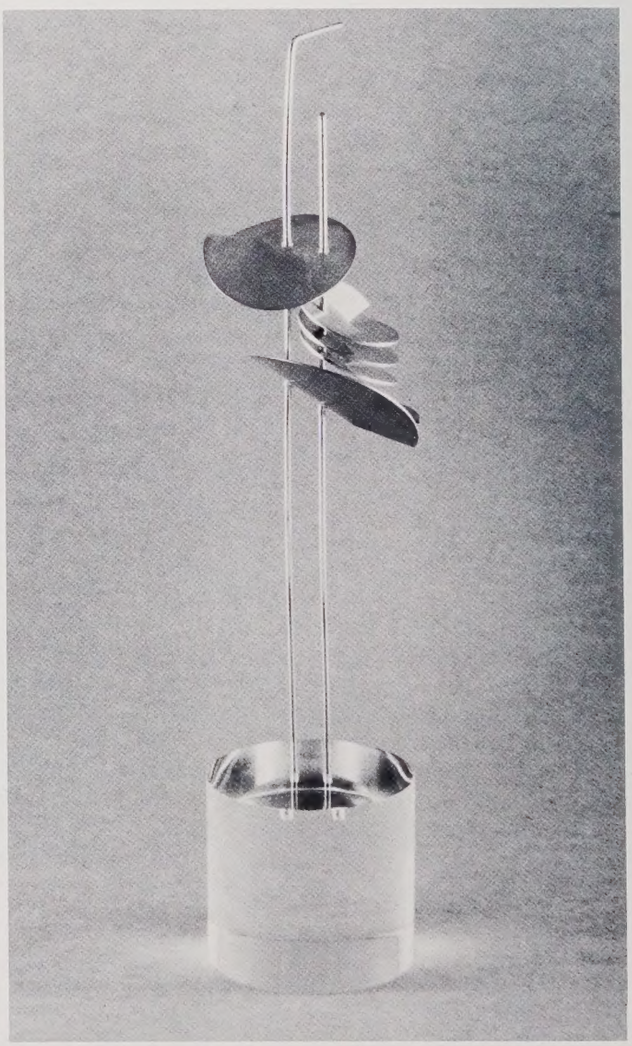
The term kinetic art has been applied to everything from work that depicts movement

Clockwise from right: *Torso Form*, steel, brass, ivory, leather, 1976; *Earrings*, 14k gold, 3x⅞", 1982; *Single Ear Sculpture*, 1982; *Necklace*, wire; *Conic Bracelet*, silver









to work that provides violent retinal stimulation. But in Thiewes's work, it describes three-dimensional form whose elements are capable of unpredictable animation. Alexander Calder, who began constructing mobiles in 1932, is perhaps the most brilliant exponent of the genre and certainly relevant to this discussion. His aerial constructions suspend abstract compositions on a filamentlike backbone, from which flow a series of wire cantilevers. The balance is engineered so that the slightest shift in air current can set the elements in motion. An elegant Thiewes earring from 1982 pays homage to the Calder vision. In her piece, a group of slender, petal-like forms are pierced and suspended from the exaggerated curve of an arched earwire. Made to dangle from a plexiglass stand when not in use, the earring echoes the grace of Calder's mobiles, in minature. But, while Calder's work is free to answer only to his esthetic intention, the sculptural jewelry of Thiewes is bound by its need to perform. In answering this need Thiewes expands the notion of kinesis to fulfill another of her own intentions, that of creating form that functions as "an extension of one's physical self."

Thiewes makes the wearer "conscious" of extended physicality, either of the body or appended jewelry form. In her work, the extension does not provide a smooth transition from Part A to Part B—or from body to structure. It creates an abrupt consciousness of self and of inhabited space. The consequence is that the wearer must constantly acknowledge not only her own body but the fact that she supports an appendage. In this case, it is a bracelet that frequently shifts its own balance and requires a corresponding reaction from the wearer. If the wearer is not responsive, the bracelet provides a prodding reminder of responsibility. In the case of the earring, the wearer must respond by wearing her hair cropped closely or pulled back from the earwire. A spontaneous move of the head could produce a painful reminder of what one has agreed to endure. The wearer must also assume responsibility for the potential in movement. The body serves not as static pedestal but as mobile armature, a dynamic and interactive element of the entire composition.

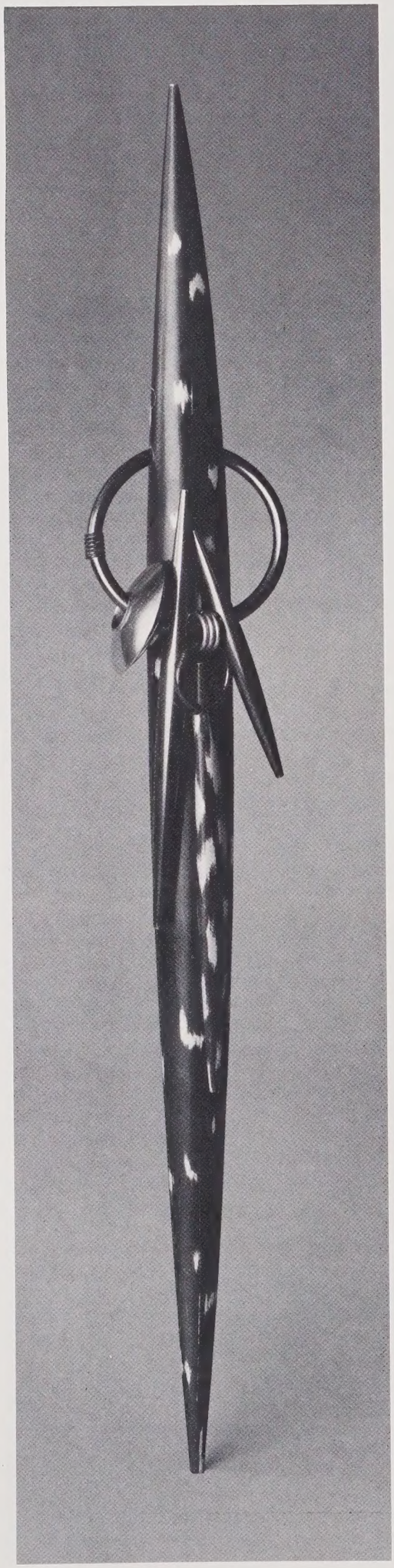
Although Thiewes's concern for movement might be placed in the traditionof theatrical jewelry represented today by Otto Künzli, Pierre Degen and Caroline Broadhead, her work doesn't look like avant-garde jewelry; it has all the classical signs of conventional jewelry. Until recently, it has been fairly small in scale, made of precious materials and essentially readable as abstract "charm" constructions. Yet, by the strength of its imposition on the wearer and the profundity of its concerns, it warrants a classification beyond jewelry. When we look at it in the context of what Rosalind Krauss calls "sculpture in the expanded field," we see the possible confluence of theater and sculpture:

"Now it is beyond question that a large number of postwar European and American sculptors became interested both in theater and in the extended experience of time which seemed part of the conventions of the stage. From this interest came some sculpture to be used as props in productions of dance or theater (Noguchi/M. Graham), some to function as surrogate performers, an some to act as the on-stage generators or scenic effects. . . . In the event that the work did not attempt to transform the whole of its ambient space into a theatrical or dramatic context, it would often internalize a sense of theatricality—by projecting, as its raison d'être, a sense of itself as an actor, as an agent of movement. In this sense, the entire range of kinetic sculpture can be seen as tied to the concept of theatricality."[1]

The conic bracelets confirm this observation. As pure form, their graceful spiral sweeps have a hieratic, even ritualistic presence. As jewelry, they are assertively dramatic. The angle at which they flare out from the wrist creates a wide circular cage for the arm. They are antithetical to the body's contour. They force the wearer to be totally conscious of their presence and alter her movement to accommodate the form. The arm of the wearer cannot rest comfortably at its side when housed in this structure/stricture, nor can the wearer don additional clothing without first removing it. The wearer becomes a willing participant in the "stage setting," working her way around the prop in movements directed by Thiewes's jewelry. At the same time, the very drama of the jewelry places the wearer on stage.

Beginning in 1982, Thiewes extended earlier earring experiments and produced a long (5″ to 6″) structure, which supported an array of disks and cones. These are strikingly successful esthetic statements, enhanced by her fastening solution, which, in effect, becomes nonexistent. Two approaches were taken. At first, the singular wire was honed at each end to be able to pierce the supporting fabric. By slightly arching the structure, the wearer was able to provide enough tension to keep the piece suspended on its cloth field. In a later refinement, the single element gave way to a design in which the sculptural statement was essentially "split" between two halves. By drilling tiny receiving holes in certain of the sculptural elements, and providing again a subtle curve for tension, Thiewes devised a masterful way for the wearer to stab some fabric with one half of the pin and then provide closure by weaving the second stem through carefully engineered holes. A delicate twist would lock the composition into place. In a further refinement, Thiewes was able to devise some pins where the holes were so ingeniously planned that they were able to accept the male element from either end. The result was that the wearer was able to achieve two very different arrangements with a "single" pin.

With time, this format has grown steadily bolder. The delicate wire support has given way to a thick yet graceful spiculum, which is drilled to accept a circular support of form from which dangle the usual array of carefully proportioned geometry—disks of metal and slate, other circles, spicula. At 9″ long, they no longer provide discreet addenda to the outfit. Worn across the chest, they are the outfit. They are the first thing seen—they greet the viewer aggressively—they expand the wearer's presence and dramatically signal the wearer's individuality. If they are worn diagonally by a woman, they emphasize the breast at the same time that they echo it. These pieces have



Uptown Dance Series, three pins, silver, 18k gold, heat and chemical patina, 8" l., 1985–86

grown to take center stage—they are overscaled and daggerlike in their silhouette. They stab and they grab your attention—they are riveting!

It becomes clear that the way Thiewes had attended to the body as armature for her sculpture places her work in the context of kinetic art. Krauss informs us that it is valid to also place such work in a performance milieu. What remains to be discussed from the artist's own intentions is her investigation of light. And Krauss reminds us that light-art too can be seen to fall under the umbrella term of theatricality.[2]

Thiewes makes use of light in an unexpected way. She eschews the standard jeweler's technique for addressing light as a property of refracting stones. Instead, she has chosen the language of the sculptor—using surface quality, line and mass to make her eloquent point. Thiewes has worked to develop forms that convey a minimum of extraneous material to the viewer; they are vehicles for the subtle dynamics of matte and polished surfaces, metal-to-slate patterns and line-to-mass relationships. One small detail in the bracelet makes the point well. Two slate disks of vastly different diameters dance among the metallic circles. The larger of the two has its surface marked by the regular patterning of incised pocks. The reason is to cut down the visual density of the expanse of slate. By incising it, Thiewes makes the surface reflect more light, thus keeping the delicate balance in her composition.

The series of pieces that utilize slit and bent disks on wire supports are an exciting light-utilizing statement. The formal elements are, again, exceedingly simple. It is their use that is sophisticated. For Thiewes has created a disk whose surface and edge have been repeatedly angled and manipulated to maximize their ability to reflect light. Worn against a stark ground, they can at first deceive the viewer into thinking that there is a clear refracting stone within the composition. Only on closer inspection do we learn that the sparkling effect was created with metal alone.

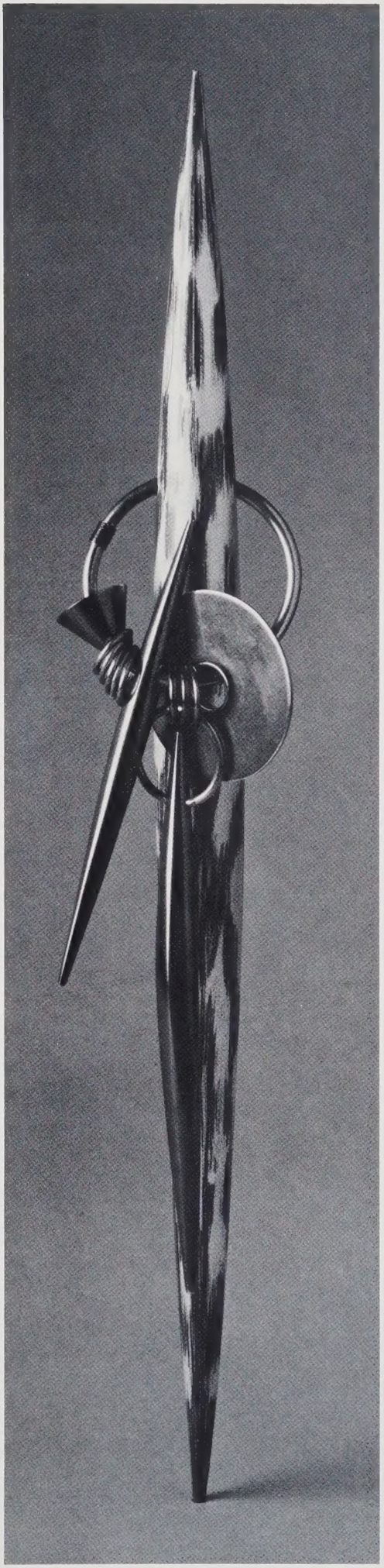
As the light is captured and reflected off the planes and edges of the work, the composi-

tions take on an additional vitality. In other words, the effect is such that the light is harnessed not only to become an element in the formal structure but an agent for the motion itself. It may be seen as intensifying the movement of the individual parts to the point that the light becomes a moving player as it ricochets off the surfaces.

Movements and sound have a mutual history in the world of performance. While obviously, sound cannot be produced without movement, the leap to a musical interpretation of Thiewes's work became apparent as our interview progressed.

Thiewes's husband is a musician, so it is not surprising that she has a voracious appetite for music and an eclectic taste. Music is a constant companion in the studio. She tells of how she might be deeply engrossed in her work, when suddenly she feels the need to make a dramatic change at the stereo. The many recordings from which she might choose at one of these moments run the gamut of the aficionado. Varese to Django Reinhardt, Coltrane to Tom Waits, The Roches to Laurie Anderson may be called upon to conjure up just the right mood for what she is trying to achieve visually. It is not surprising to find that music has actually been incorporated into her work; it may well be why movement entered her work in the first place.

In the early pieces, although sound is present, it seems almost an accidental by-product of the design process. Beginning with the single ear sculptures of 1982–83, where two vertical wires support two different compositions of silver and/or gold disks, the wearer is privy to a secret. Seemingly at random, when motion instigates, parallel clusters of disks occasionally "kiss," producing a "ting." It is high-pitched and pleasant to the ear, yet so low in decibel that it can be known only to the wearer. It happens infrequently, perhaps several times in the course of a day. But it makes the wearer pause. It serves, together with the edge of the widest disk that occasionally brushes the cheek, as a "consciousness-raising" tool. In an ironic way, it implies Thiewes's theatrical intentions as it thrusts the wearer into a performance—even if for an audience of one.



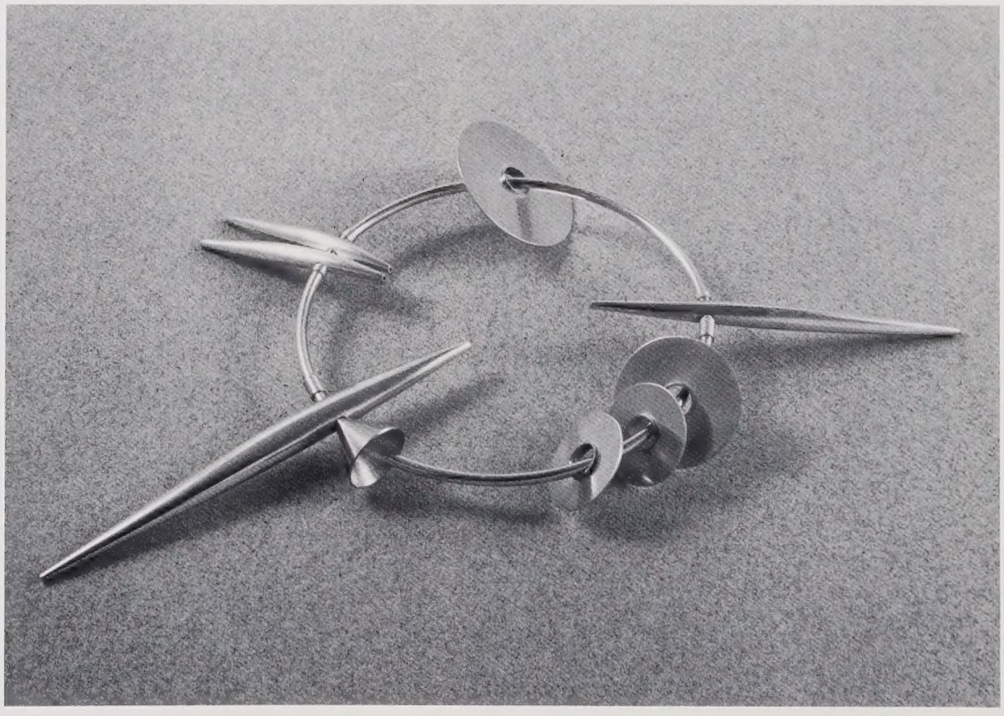
When Thiewes extended her linear, additive forms into the "dangle/bangle" structure, the sound could no longer be deemed accidental. As she added moving parts of different sizes and densities, the melodic factor grew more prominent. As their very scale and configuration dictated personal movement, they no doubt dictated where they would be worn. The prudent owner would probably take them to a party but not to a boardroom. Thiewes forces the wearer to make contextual decisions as to where the jewelry is to perform.

I have occasionally alluded to sexual referents in Thiewes's work: the wire pins fasten when male elements enter receiving holes; the larger pins echo the breast form and call attention to it. The point is easily made that if musicality is a common thread, binding much of the artist's thought, so too is sexuality. It has been present from her earliest investigations.

For her thesis work, Thiewes created an ambitious multimedia torso form, a corset or bustier. One of the two variations was fabricated of steel, brass, ivory and leather. As an aside, it is worth noting that this early piece transformed the wearer into a performer. The piece took 40 minutes to get into, while the materials made it even more difficult to endure. It was costume rather than jewelry. But more to the point, this piece was sexually evocative. Owing its form to a woman's Victorian undergarment, its rear lacing and front metal hooks suggest all the constriction and repression symbolized by that period. The lacing, the metal and the fact that the bodice is of leather suggest the deviant sexuality that is frequently the product of such repression.

Subsequently, the sexual codes take a very different form. In fact, they are the form itself. Thiewes's geometric vocabulary, pure and pristine as it may appear to be, can be construed as male and female metaphors. Throughout her work, we find a leitmotif of the female (circle) frequently opened, often entered, regularly pierced by a male lance of varying proportions. The ubiquitous proximity of the breastlike cone only reinforces the suggestion of a sexual vocabulary.

In a pair of earrings from 1982, a gold spiculumlike form, sliced in half lengthwise, serves



Left: *Earrings*, silver, 14k gold, carved slate, heat and chemical color, 4" l., 1986; **below:** *Grappelli Bracelet*, silver, 18k gold, 1984–85

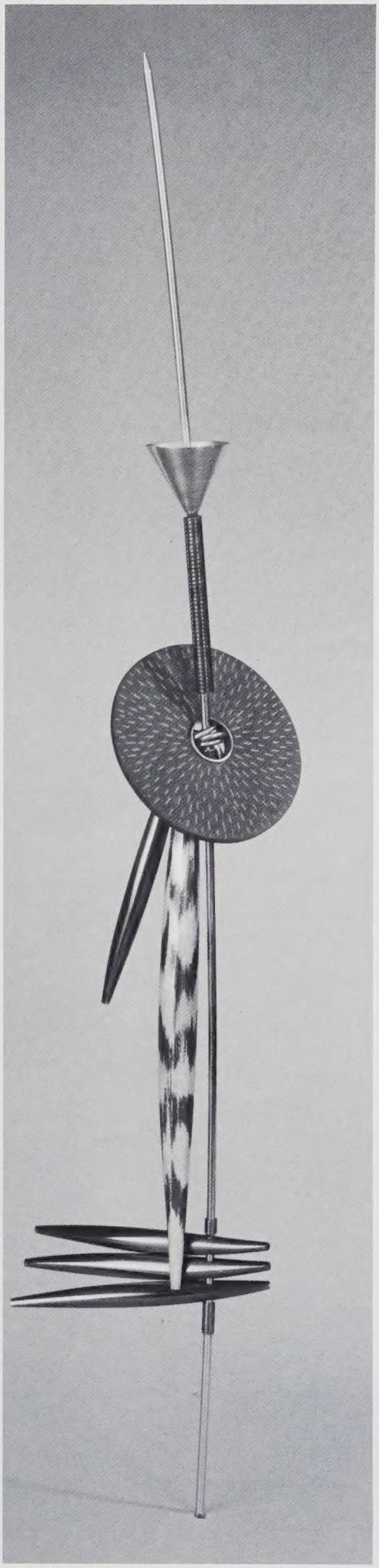
as the dominant motif. It appears to have speared and skewered two parallel gold disks that come to rest horizontally at the top of the pointed form. The penetration symbolism is quite pronounced at the same time that the three gold elements may be easily viewed as a stylized depiction of male genitalia.

Many of the linear, single-element pins lend themselves to sexual interpretation. In an elegant and simple example from 1984, the gold shaft enters a series of silver cones and circles. The reading may even be extended to include a statement on sexual roles. Thus the "male" is fabricated out of the more precious material. The role of the female is highly limited and proscribed by the axis set up by the male. In fact, the "females" are hardly capable of independent movement, but instead are open to manipulation.

Although Thiewes has used her geometric vocabulary to create purely sculptural forms without function, I have refrained from discussing them because I have not seen them. However, in a recent *Metalsmith* article (Spring 1987), Michael Dunas responds to a piece entitled *Stella Bottero*:

We know it is palm-sized and our memory bank acknowledges reality equivalents. When we look for objective correlatives to satisfy our inquisitiveness, we begin to feel the 'spikiness' of the pointed legs, the 'sharp' edges of the slate, the 'razored' studs that emerge from its surface. The title of the composition suggests a feminine analogy, and we begin to sense that the legs are spiked heels, that a woman's character is bottled by a well-turned physique, polished and poised. Beneath this stereotypical image, or above it, in this case, there lurks an abrasive resistance, a studded rebelliousness, a dangerous consequence to categorization. . . . As a metaphor of manipulation, it craves to be manipulated . . .[3]

The most current work is the culmination of all the artist's explorations to date. In the case of the large, overscaled pins, *Uptown Dance Series* from 1985–86, the sexual implications extend beyond the symbolism already described. Worn as they are on the chest, they seem to signal a "look-but-don't-touch" message. And their spiked quality may be viewed as so



Pin, silver, 18k gold, carved slate, heat and chemical color, 8½" l., 1986

menacing that they take on the power of a weapon, real or implied. It is within this context that I would like to explore the recent direction of her work, which, in the final analysis, can be seen as the grand crescendo of all her diverse themes.

Bengal I and *Bengal II* from late 1986, are two extraordinarily powerful bracelets. It is all here—the constructivist acuity and compositional clarity, the highly personal vocabulary, the rhythm of form and surface, the theatricality, the musicality and especially the sexuality.

The means are the same, too, except for one new conceit, introduced in 1985, a surface treatment of mottled stripes, achieved through a process of heat and chemistry. It is a brilliant and welcome addition. This technique provides an energized surface for the spikes as well as a new and unprecedented animation for the overall composition. It is handled in such a way that it actually echoes the form of the element it enhances at the same time that it sets up a visual vibration. The result is that it becomes a retinal accompaniment to the aural range of the composition.

Thiewes says she named *Bengal I* and *Bengal II* for the stripes of the tiger, sleek stalker in the steamy jungles of India, Pakistan and Africa. Even as they point to that beautiful and sensual beast, there are numerous ways in which these pieces manage to evoke much more the mystery of unfamiliar and exotic places.

At 9½" in flat diameter, the overall form of these bracelets takes on the super scale we have previously encountered in the recent linear pins. But upon, the tiger stripes and the inevitable jungle associations, a new referent is introduced—tribal modes of body adornment. Repetition, seen clearly here in circles and tapered spikes, is a frequent factor in primitive jewelry. Once again, the very basic sexual nature of these forms cannot be denied. They remind us that the very wearing of jewelry (in more than just tribal worlds) is frequently a means of transmitting sexual messages—availability, status, prowess, accomplishment, in addition to the obvious attempt to seduce. But there is more. Raised up on the tubular tips, the artist's preferred installation, these bracelets suggest the controlled energy of an animal poised to strike. Inherent tension, indeed, impending danger are implied. Not only do they at first seem dangerous to wear, but they are dangerous for anyone who gets too close. The implications of spikes, daggers, spears and the slate shields all allude to the weapons employed by a battling tribal people. Those battles pit man against man, against beast, against woman. And so the bracelets take us full circle, back to the universal sexual struggle; pulsing visually, pulsing sexually. These bracelets with all their physical and psychological weaponry are truly dramatic sexual statements.

At a moment when 27-year-olds can show at MoMA, and artists in their early 30s can have retrospectives at the Whitney (Eric Fischel; David Salle), the artist who concentrates on personal performance instead of publicity is a welcome find. Rachelle Thiewes's commitment to her own concerns has resulted in a coherent body of work notable for the richness of its content as well as its provocative beauty. A statement that speaks with clarity and integrity, her work transcends the contemporary appetite for self-congratulatory media coverage.

Notes

1. Rosalind E. Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (New York: Viking, 1977), p. 204
2. *Ibid.*
3. Michael Dunas, "The Modern Ache: Form Beyond Function," *Metalsmith* (Spring 87), p. 22

Vanessa S. Lynn is the director of The Gallery at Workbench and a frequent contributor to *Metalsmith*.

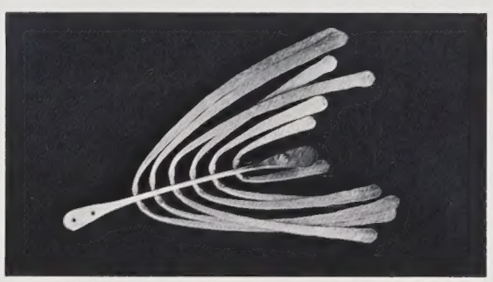
THE SOUND AND THE SURFACE THE METALWORK AND JEWELRY OF HARRY BERTOIA

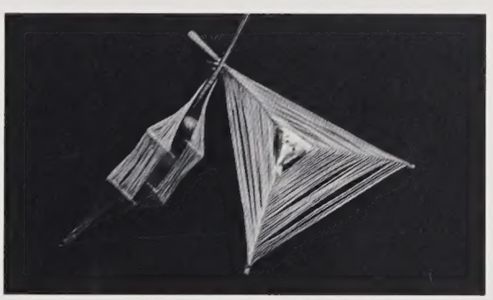
by Susan J. Montgomery

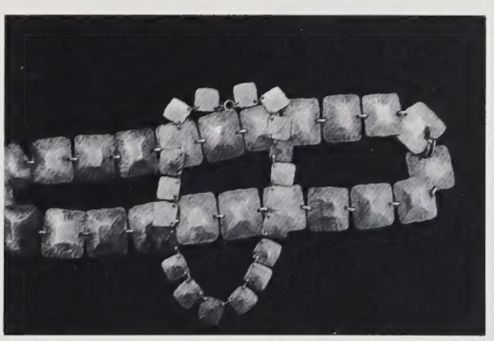
Harry Bertoia was not simply a metalsmith or a furniture designer, sculptor or printmaker, artist or craftsman. He was all of these. Apparently unconcerned with the barriers that had been assumed for years between art and craft, esthetics and function, creativity and commercial success, he balanced as subtle, evocative esthetic vision with practical design solutions. Some of his sculpture functions as fountains. His chairs are sculptural forms designed to hold the human body. The jewelry is literally sculpture to wear. Many of his most minimal, modernist works make music. They are all abstractions, or rather *extractions,* from nature, suggestive of fields of grain, shooting stars or plant forms, perhaps, but always with multiple interpretations relative to scale, color, movement and sound.

Bertoia was born in 1915 in the village of San Lorenzo in northeastern Italy. Emigrating as a teenager with his father, first to Canada and then to Michigan, Harry was reunited with his brother Oreste, who had settled in Detroit earlier. After some difficulty learning English, Bertoia entered a special program for artistically gifted students at Cass Technical High School in Detroit. There he pursued his childhood interest in drawing and painting and received his first training in metalsmithing. A scholarship enabled him to attend the School of the Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts for one year to study painting and drawing. In 1937, on another scholarship based on the metalwork he had done at Cass, he entered Cranbrook Academy of Art in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan.

Cranbrook had an enormous impact on Bertoia. It was here that he met his future wife, Brigitta Valentiner, daughter of a renowned art historian, as well as colleagues Charles Eames and Eero Saarinen. The independence fostered at Cranbrook would stand Bertoia in good stead for the rest of his life, freeing him to explore all aspects of design. He did not attend formal classes in sculpture, but he did have a great deal of contact with Carl Milles, the resident sculptor, and ceramist Maija Grotell.[1] At Cranbrook, Bertoia concentrated on monoprints, drawing and jewelry. Like the work on paper, the jewelry is abstract and organic in inspiration, with an interest in surface texture.







Opposite page: *Vase*, bronze, 11¼x5⁹⁄₁₆", c. 1940. Collection: Cranbrook Academy of Art Museum; from top: *Studies*, welded bronze and bronze alloys, 2–4" l. Collection: Bertoia Studio; *Metal Study*. Collection: Mrs. Brigitta Bertoia; *Metal Study*; *Belt and Necklace*, gold, 30" l. and 11" l. Collection: Mrs. Brigitta Bertoia. Photos this page: Karl Bungerz

As part of his scholarship obligation, Bertoia was to oversee the metals shop, which had been neglected since Arthur Neville Kirk's departure in 1934.[2] This probably entailed a general supervision of students who wanted to experiment with metals, as Bertoia's own training at this point must have been only in the basic metalsmithing techniques. His reaction to this opportunity is characteristic of his quiet confidence: ". . . This appealed to me very much because I saw some of the tools that were there and when I see tools I want to get busy with them."[3] To a great extent, Bertoia seems to be self-taught, an extraordinary accomplishment in light of the technical skill evident in his work. Only one year after arriving at Cranbrook, he was appointed Metal Craftsman, a full-time teaching position.

Bertoia's metalworking had been limited to jewelry at Cass, but Cranbrook's equipment enabled him to produce holloware as well. One of several coffee/tea sets he made is now in the collection of the Cranbrook Academy of Art Museum. With their clear, clean, silver surfaces, the vessels almost seem sliced from solid blocks. Their high polish fits within the 1930s and 1940s esthetic of Eliel Saarinen (Director of Cranbrook from its inception in 1925 to 1946) and other Scandinavian modernist designers. This service and the Kamperman service, now at the Detroit Institute of Arts, seem too impersonal, too resolutely unadorned to relate to Bertoia's work as a whole. Although produced with consummate skill and a sophisticated sense of design, they do not emit the evocative mystery that surrounds his other work in jewelry and large-scale sculpture.

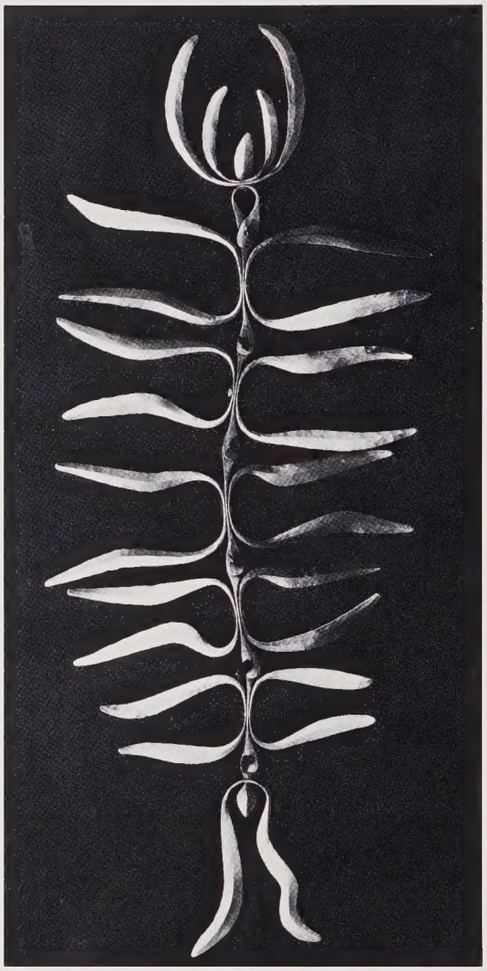
There is no doubt that Bertoia was fascinated with surfaces. A bronze vase made about 1940 shows clearly his interest in the purely reflective nature of metal. The highly polished golden surface undulates in repetitive, soft angles, distorting the reflection and causing the whole piece to move with an organic sense of growth. The coffee/tea sets and this vase indicate one extreme of surface treatment that Bertoia explored and then abandoned in favor of more subtle fin-

ishes. It may have been his interest in surface texture that drew him away from holloware, for he produced it only during his Cranbrook years, 1938 to 1943. On the other hand, practical considerations probably contributed to this disinterest. In the spring of 1943 the Cranbrook metal shop closed[4] and shortly thereafter Bertoia left for California and design jobs in defense industries. Bertoia's jewelry production, on the other hand, extended throughout his career and may have served as small-scale studies or sketches of ideas and techniques. The jewelry is improvisational by nature, freely exploring ideas of space, texture, movement and a kind of organic liveliness difficult to translate into larger pieces.

During his tenure at Cranbrook Bertoia peddled his jewelry around campus in the studios and offices.[5] As the war effort escalated, metals became increasingly difficult to obtain. Much of the early wire jewelry, reportedly, was made from scraps found around the metal shop. A series of brooches comprised of delicately hammered sections of wire was produced in 1942–43. Flattened at each end, soft, faceted petal shapes were joined along a spine or clustered together with tiny rivets, suggestive of wavy, underwater flowers or sea creatures. The reference to natural forms is broad and can never quite be grasped or identified. These designs are, in the final assessment, abstract and nonrepresentational, but so evocative and mysterious as to trigger some half-forgotten, distant memory. They relate to the humorous and yet vaguely unsettling vision of Paul Klee or Alexander Calder.

The series culminates in the elegantly whimsical *Ornamental Centipede* of about 1942. Here Bertoia expands his jewelry scale, which was frequently quite large, to a nonwearable size. *Ornamental Centipede* was intended as a kind of table centerpiece. With its flexible joints and tactile surfaces, it was certainly meant to be handled and rearranged. Here the faceted petals are attached as vertebrae to a spinal column, forming a swimming/crawling creature of primal construction and delightful nature.

Other hammered pieces include a necklace and belt made in the 1940s of square,



Ornamental Centipede, brass, 19¾x8", c. 1942. Collection: Cranbrook Academy of Art Museum; **opposite page, top:** *Tea Service*, silver, lucite, c. 1938–39. Photo © 1987 The Detroit Institute of Arts, Bequest of Mrs. George Kamperman; **below:** *Coffee and Tea Service*, silver, cherry, 1940. Collection: Cranbrook Academy of Art Museum

slightly domed links. The surface texture so carefully produced in this case contradicts the smooth, uninterrupted gloss of the earlier coffee/tea services. Repetitive, slightly varying units held Bertoia's interest throughout his career. The early jewelry composed of similar but individualistic hammered wires, the square links of the necklace and belt, underscore a design philosophy Bertoia used to produce his well-known chair design for Knoll Associates (later Knoll International) in 1952. Like the work on paper and in metal, the chairs are based on a repeated module, which, in turn, determines the shape of the whole, ". . . like a cellular structure."[6]

After his marriage to Brigitta Valentiner in the spring of 1943, Bertoia moved to California to collaborate with his friend Charles Eames on the design for what would become the famous Eames chair produced by Knoll. In 1950, largely as a result of his involvement with the Eames chair, Bertoia was invited by Knoll Associates to become part of a rather unique relationship between industry and art. Bertoia was to join the Knoll staff but work independently on his own designs. His arrangement with the company[7] offered Bertoia the financial security he needed to continue with his work while supporting his growing family.[8] The Bertoias moved to Pennsylvania in 1950 and Harry established a studio in Bally, near a Knoll factory.

Typically, Bertoia approached furniture design with consistent logic and imagination. He used his experience in sculpture—his formal interests in modular form, manipulation of light and space and clarity of structure—ordering them for the first time to a functional application.

In the sculpture, I am concerned primarily with space, form and the characteristics of metal. In the chairs many functional problems have to be satisfied first . . . but when you get right down to it the chairs are studies in space, form and metals, too.

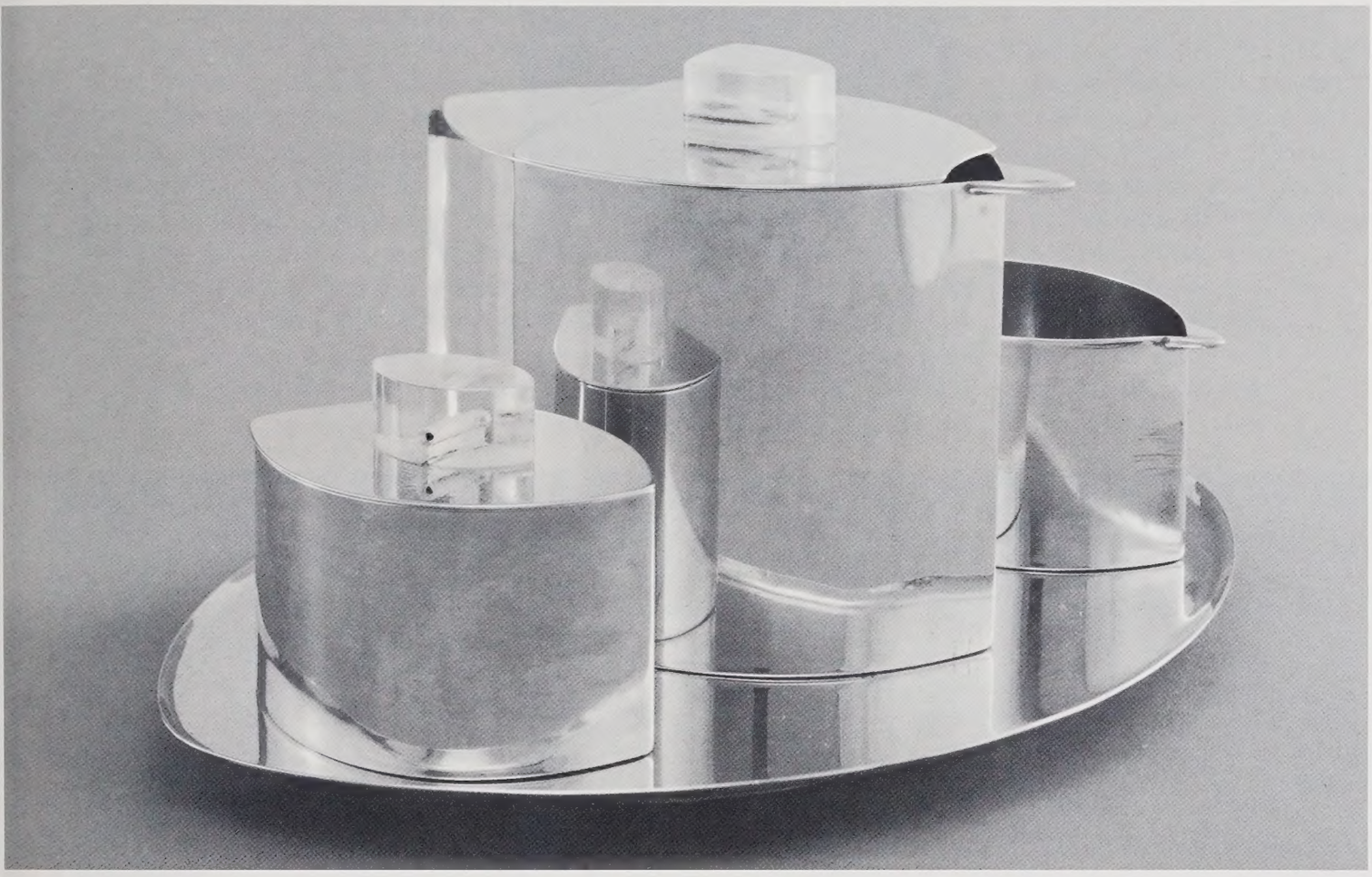
If you look at these chairs, you will find that they are mostly made of air, just like the sculpture. Space passes right through them.[9]

After first persuading Knoll to establish a metals shop in their previously solely wood-oriented factory, Bertoia researched human posture and movement and selected the diamond as the modular unit most suitable for his chairs.[10] Bertoia's frank practicality: "A Chair is designed as much by one's behind as one's head"[11] was united with a demanding esthetic.

He used materials in chair design, as he had in all his other work, to suit his purpose, not hesitating to cover the structural elements with another color or texture.

I wanted the chairs to fit as comfortably as a good coat. For flexibility in the basket construction, I used steel for strength and unified the design with nickel-chrome plating for beauty, giving the chair durability and lightness in appearance.[12]

Bertoia perfected a system for coating steel rods with molten metal for texture and color impact. Using this technique, he transformed an idea for a suspended sculpture to produce one of his most extraordinary commissions. *Sunlit Straw*, 1964, a wall sculpture for the Northwestern National Life Insurance Company in Minneapolis, is a golden tangle of metal sticks, with turquoise oxidation. Each steel rod was drawn individually through molten brass alloy.



Diamond Chair, welded steel, chrome-plated, 30½" h., designed in 1952. Photo: courtesy Knoll International

Bertoia experimented continually with various metals, alloys and techniques—spinning, welding, fusing, gilding, lacqering, enameling, even spill casting. He often painstakingly finished the sculptures alone, after his assistants had left the shop for the day, polishing, cleaning and applying just the right patina. He used industrial stock—shot, rods and sheets of metal—whatever was most appropriate to his needs.

Good design takes advantage of all the developments in technical facilities and materials. It accepts and uses the findings and revelations of other men. Yet good design's essential response is toward nature . . . to natural forms and tendencies that the designer perceives, reacts to, even stumbles upon in his investigation of an idea . . .[13]

Working in a series allowed Bertoia to refine certain ideas. The last in a series of three fountain designs was commissioned for the courtyard of the Manufacturers and Traders Trust in Buffalo in 1968. It was constructed of copper tubes, oxidized and bronze-welded into an indulating, robust form, organic in inspiration. Unlike *Sunlit Straw,* the fountain uses a solid membrane to define a surface, rather than a series of points.

In the 1970s Bertoia produced many small-scale studies that reveal his ongoing interest in welded rods with surface texturing. Very simple in shape—crosses, spirals, cubes—they were Bertoia's way of working out designs, possibly for jewelry. They are constructed of bronze and bronze alloys and are carefully patinaed and oxidized to achieve an ancient, heavily textured surface.

Meanwhile, new ideas were appearing in Bertoia's work in an entirely new dimension—sound. Noticing the musical tones of vibrating metal, Bertoia set out to control these sounds, experimenting with alloys, the shape, length and density of the forms, the combinations of other metals and movement caused by wind and touch. He developed the musical pieces with his brother Oreste, an amateur musician, assisting in controlling the tonal range of the metals. Around 1965 he began assembling musical pieces in his studio for concerts, and in February 1975 he installed the most extraordinary of the "sounding sculptures" at the Standard Oil Company Plaza in Chicago. Banks of free-standing vertical rods are spaced throughout a long reflecting pool to catch the wind as it sweeps across the plaza. As they hum and buzz with the changing wind velocity, they provide a never-ending concert for passersby. At the dedication ceremony, Bertoia himself waded into the pool to "play" the vibrating rods for the audience.

Although Bertoia cannot be considered a traditional metalsmith, his work is inextricably involved with the essence of metals and the fine craftsmanship of the material. He explored and delighted in the metal itself, what it would and would not do, its color, weight, texture, even its sound. His training at Cranbrook reinforced his natural tendency to move easily across boundaries between art and craft and between media, through borrowing and adapting the techniques of one to suit the other.

Bertoia himself summed up his life and work a year and a half before his death in 1978:

I did not start with a written credo or manifesto. Nor was there a program to be followed. It all came about very slowly. School days exposed me to the hows more than the whys or the whats. Encounters with the work of others were stimulants to broader vistas. Childhood memories, mostly happy ones, persisted. Nature as an influence, always strong. Companionship, love and family, a measure of fulfillment. Social contact and hours of solitude, all incredients [sic] in the process of one's growth. Enthusiastic beginnings and recognition of failures marking as long quest to seek and sometimes find a form, a structure, a sound or a way. A find that would tend to make me feel what I am or one that would cause a change in me, would simply deepen the mystery. Facing a problem, yes. Solving it, more often than not, would proove [sic] evanescent. The acceptance of the reality of the dream as a stimulant and propellant toward achieving the other reality generated an atmosphere of involvement rather than passivity. Immersion into the vast recesses of the mind leading to the realization that the inner world is as immense as the cosmos outside . . . At this eternal moment, I have a gut feeling that awareness of the miracle of life is the purpose of life. I might never know . . .[14]

Notes

1. Harry Bertoia interview with Paul Cummings, June 20, 1972, Archives of American Art transcript, p. 6.
2. Cranbrook Archives, Alumni Records, Richard Raseman to Harry Bertoia, May 3, 1937. I am grateful to C. David Farmer for bringing this information and other details he uncovered in the Cranbrook Archives to my attention.
3. Cummings interview, op. cit., p. 6.
4. Cranbrook Archives, Trustees' executive committee minutes, February 2, 1943.
5. I am grateful to Miss Marguerite Kimball for her recent insights into Bertoia's work and personality in 1942–43.
6. Harry Bertoia, as quoted in "Pure Design Research," *Forum,* XCVII (September, 1952).
7. Joanne Ditmer, "Bertoia Chair 'Made of Air,'" *The Denver Post,* May 29, 1965, np. Bertoia was to receive royalties on each chair sold up to an agreed-upon dollar amount.
8. Daughter Lesta was six and son Val one year old in 1950; another daughter, Celia, would arrive in 1955.
9. Harry Bertoia, as quoted in *Chairs by Bertoia,* Knoll Associates brochure, undated.
10. *Ibid.*
11. Joanne Ditmer, "Bertoia Chair 'Made of Air,'" *The Denver Post,* Sunday, May 29, 1965, np.
12. Harry Bertoia, as quoted in "The Creation of an Unusual Metal Sculpture," *Minneapolis Tribune Sunday Magazine,* January 10, 1965, np.
13. Harry Bertoia, as quoted in Knoll International brochure, 1966.
14. Harry Bertoia, handwritten letter to Clifford West, February, 1976, Archives of American Art.

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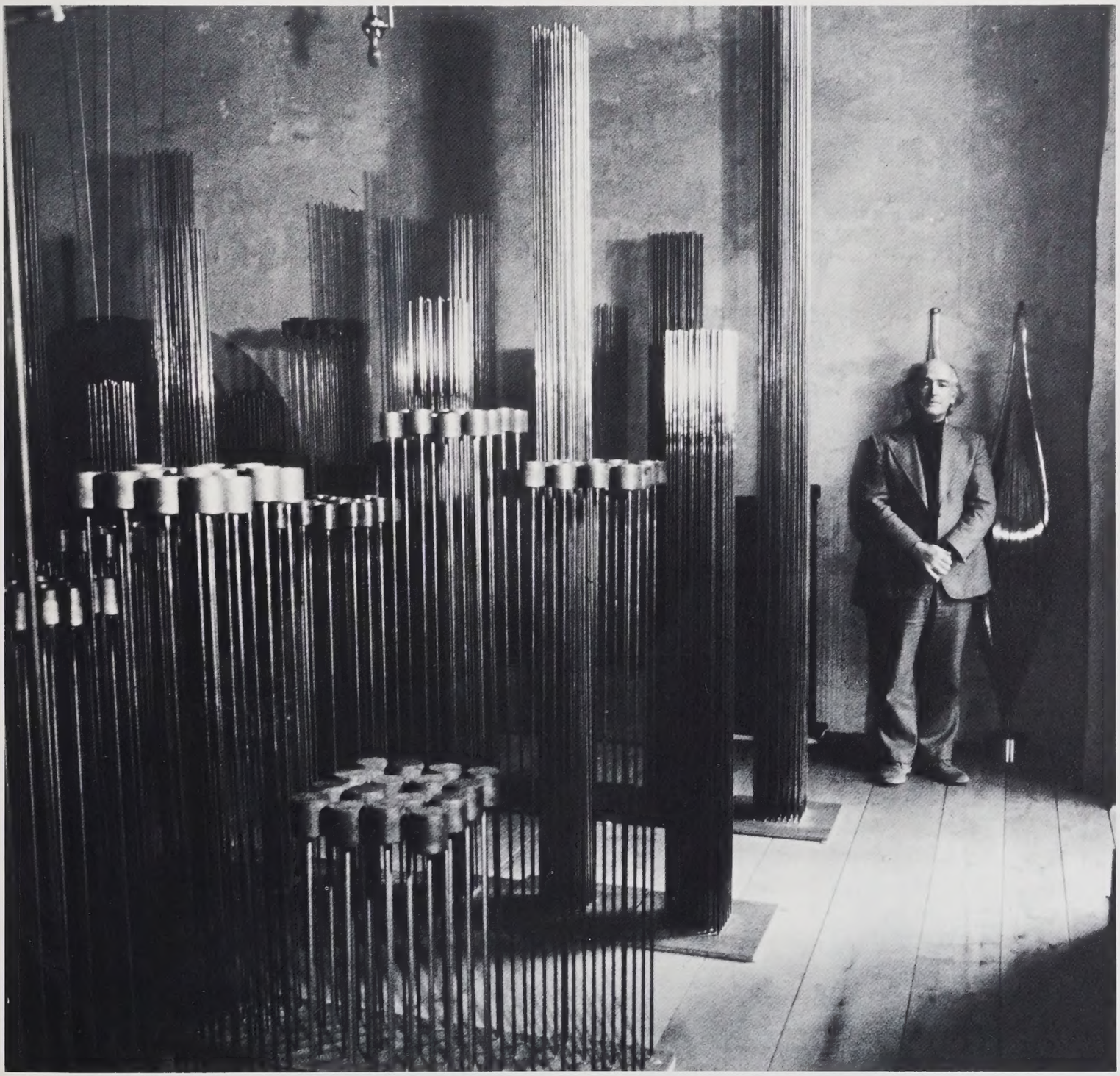
Unpublished material in the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution

Acknowledgments

Special thanks to Marguerite Kimball, Brigitta Bertoia, Val and Kylene Bertoia, C. David Farmer, C.B. West, Gregory Wittcopp, Bruce Hartman, Joan Marter, Peter Blume, Robert Cardinale, Martin Eidelberg, Karl Bungerz and Jack Carnell for their assistance with this article.

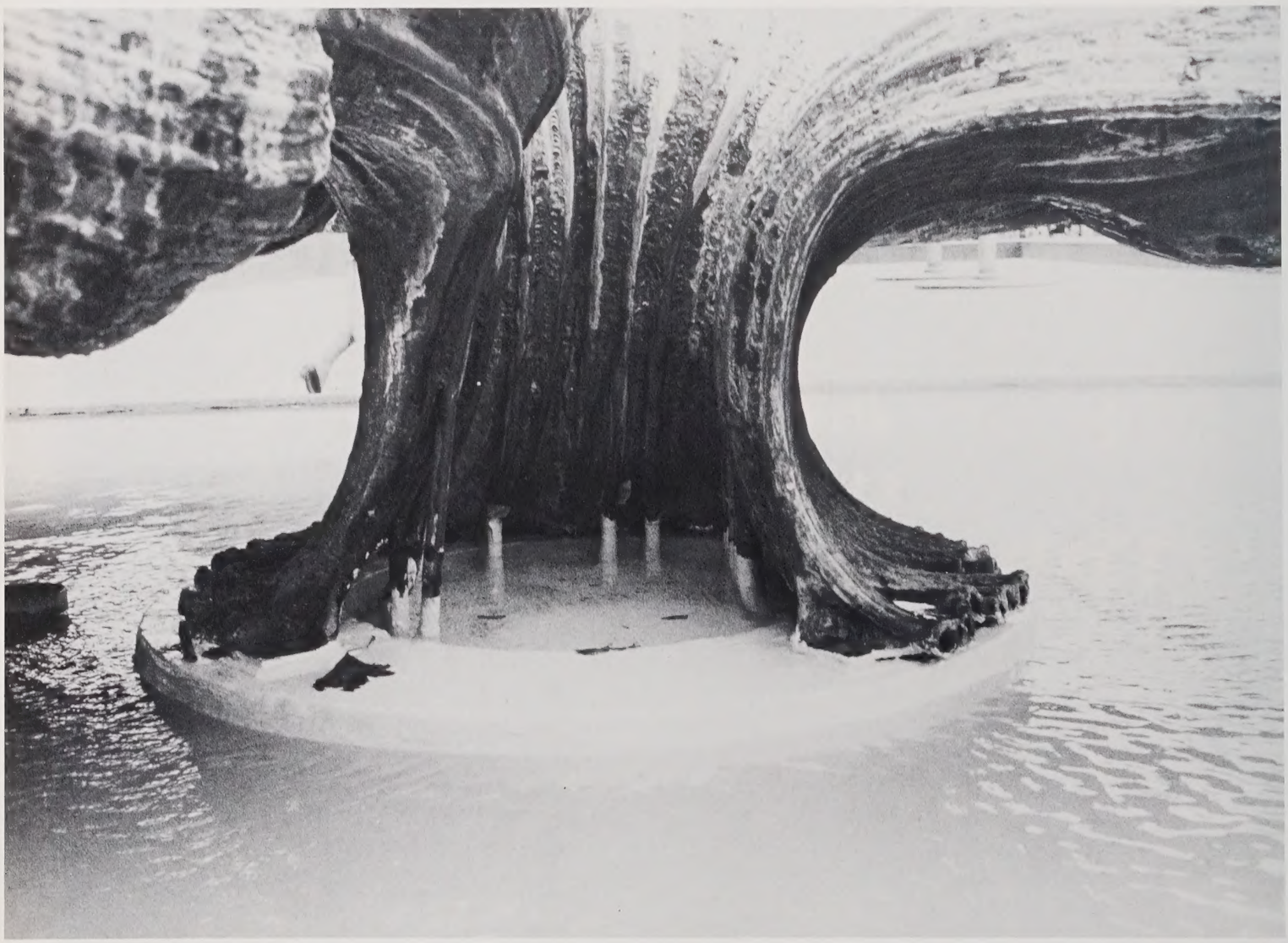
Susan J. Montgomery is a PhD. candidate in American Studies at Boston University, specializing in decorative arts.

The sounding pieces are sculptural works that produce metallic sounds when acted upon by an external force, moved by the wind, struck or strummed by hand. These sound-producing pieces can be categorized in three groups, varying in form, size and sound: gongs, singing bars and the largest group, vertical clusters of interacting wires or rods attached to a base. The base rests on either a resonation box or dampening cushion, which modifies the sounds. The vertical clusters range from short groups of bristly wire to limber groups of ½ inch rod, some approaching 10 feet tall. The tonality and its duration are dependent on the length, cross section, alloy and intensity of force exerted on the piece. These clusters look and move much like their earthly inspiration—clumps of wild grass or reeds. The gongs, some rectilinear, others amorphous, are cut from plate or are hollow fabrications. These pieces are played by either striking with a mallet or stroking and scratching with felt- or rubber-tipped tools. Of limited visible motion, they emit a variety of sounds. The last group, singing bars, are short lengths of thick bar hanging from the ceiling. Positioned so they swing and clang together, dancing in space above the other pieces, they make clear, bell-like sounds, accenting the activity below.
—Karl Bungerz



Harry Bertoia standing behind his *Sounding* sculptures, installed in the barn of his Pennsylvania residence. Photo: Clifford B. West.

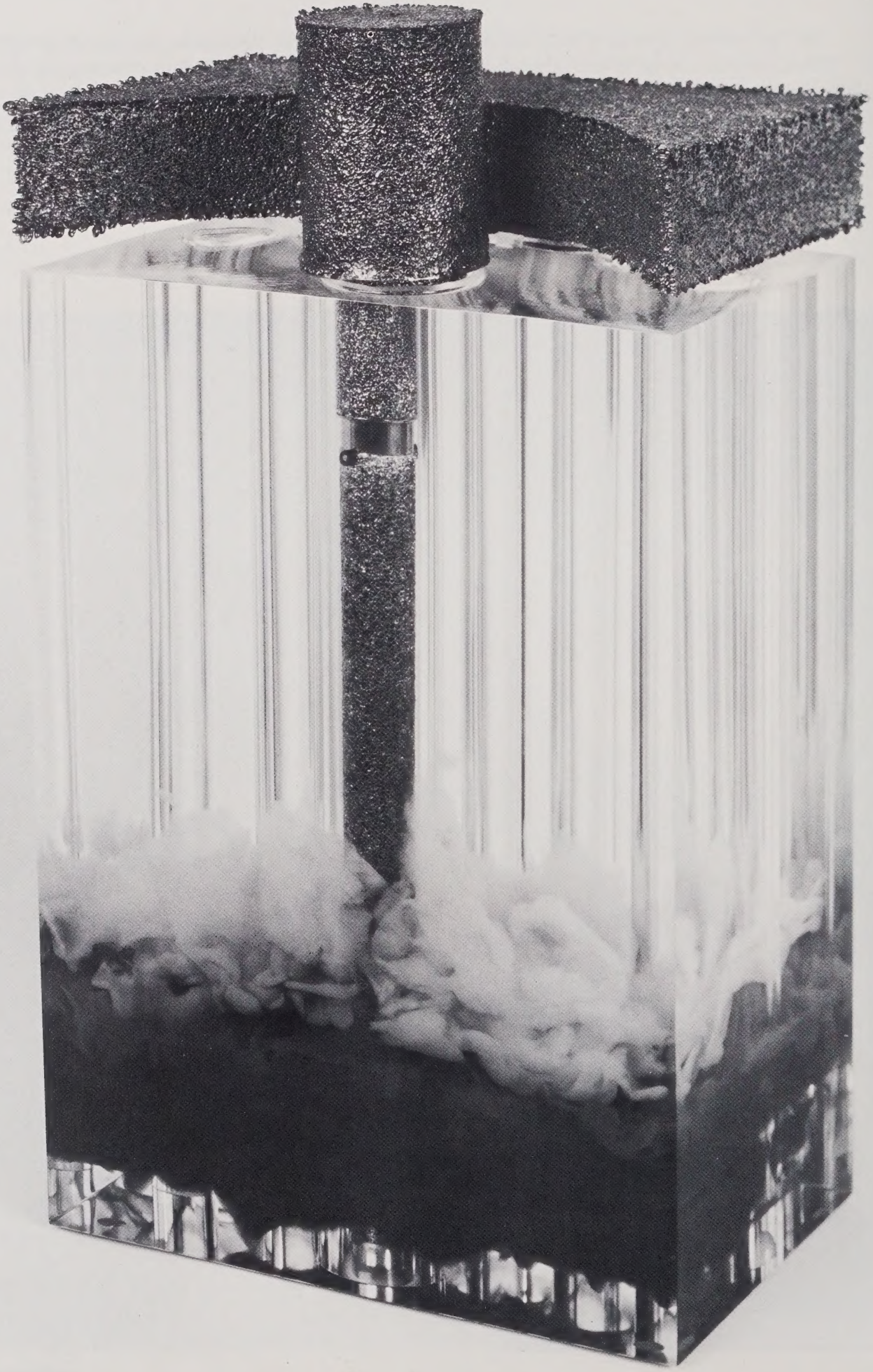
Large commissioned pieces—fountains, etc.—are more or less finished or predetermined before they are started! Small pieces are ever a creative search for me, indicating how the large pieces will be. Therefore, I have simply to carry them out or execute them—not, of course, in a static state of mind, rather as a challenge. But they are somewhat like a flower which attracts many bees—fixed in time and place—there for many to see, as opposed to my day-to-day pieces which are like a bush, which divides and subdivides, eventually carrying me to many, many individuals.



Fountain **(left)** and details **(above and right)**, bronze-welded copper tubing, 7x8x12'. Photo: courtesy Theresa Kazmierczak, Manufacturers and Traders Trust Company, Buffalo, NY; **opposite page:** *Sunlit Straw*, brass-coated steel, 46' l. Photo: Wayne Reynolds and Associates, courtesy Northwestern National Life Insurance Company, Minneapolis

The big pieces are a result of metal knowledge and physical forces; they can be any size, on up and up.... They too are part of me, of course; however, I am following certain laws of metal and its reaction to bending, falling, cutting, etc. Thus when these objects are played on by the wind and sun they will move, change shape, but always return to obey the law by which they were created. Smaller pieces are a continuum, but they are, say, working from the inside out, ad infinitum, or infinity, as if you continue on and on and on.

Harry Bertoia, quotes from a conversation with C.B. West in 1977



THE JEWISH CEREMONIAL OBJECT A CONTEMPORARY HISTORY

by Bernard Bernstein

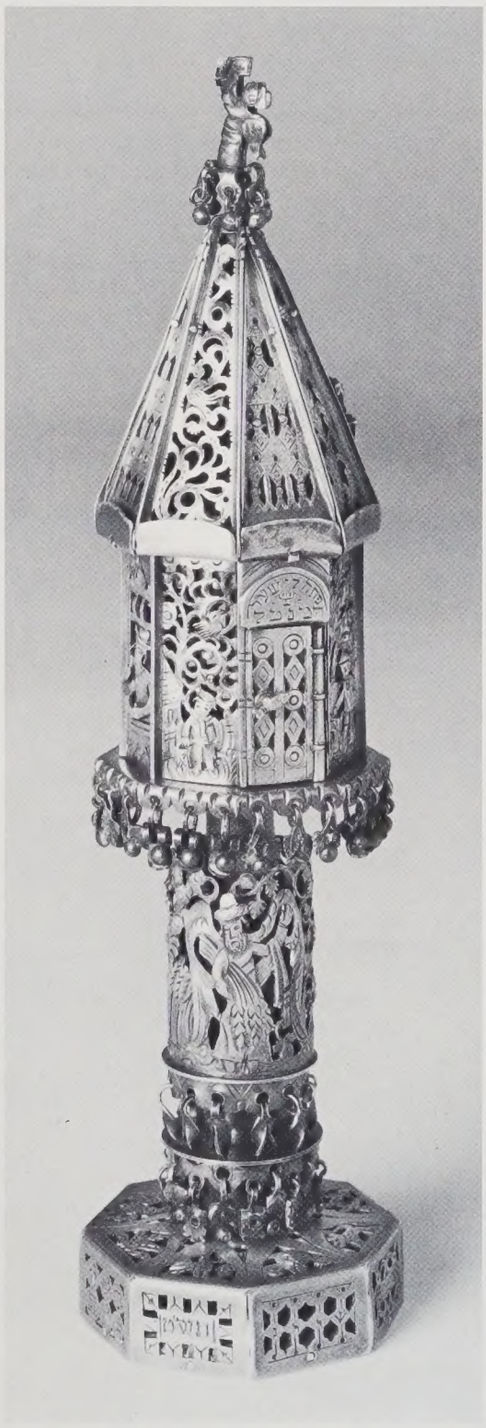
Jewish ceremonial objects have been in production since ancient times. Periodic migrations, voluntary and otherwise, distributed the Jewish people throughout most of the world. The surrounding non-Jewish cultures sometimes played either a benign or harmful role in influencing the nature of Jewish rituals and the design of ritual objects.

If you look at Jewish ceremonial pieces in museums, books and auction catalogs, you become aware of certain common features: the extant objects were made between the 17th and late 19th centuries, mostly of silver, in the baroque, rococo or neoclassical style. Earlier pieces rarely survived. As in secular metalwork of the time, the chief decorative techniques were repoussé and engraving. Casting was also common, especially in brass pieces. Most of the objects are European in origin, though there are examples from North Africa, the Middle East, India and China. Western European work was made by Christian silversmiths since guilds generally excluded Jews.

The late 19th- and most of the 20th-century works are not well represented because the industrial age led to a decline in the number of silversmiths and esthetic decay in the decorative arts. Factory-made ritual objects were corruptions, third-generation rehashes of the older, more authentic styles and for good reason are not often seen in museums, books or auction catalogs.

In 1906, with the founding of the Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts in Jerusalem, Palestine became an important center for the craft production of ceremonial art. Early Bezalel designs appear to derive from the Middle Eastern style, European decorative arts and hints of Art Nouveau, Art Deco and a noticeable helping of what looks like the public school manual-training class style of the 1930s and 1940s in America. This is not surprising since Palestine was, as Israel is now, a mosaic of many cultural influences. With the high-speed absorption of refugees from pre-war Germany and post-war Europe in the 30s and 40s, the esthetic balance shifted to a modernist style, which Israeli metalsmiths continue to favor.

In the United States, handcrafted ceremonial art is rare between the 18th-century silver of Myer Myers (the first Jewish silversmith in the colonies) and the work of the idiosyncratic Ilya Schor, who emigrated from Poland in the 1940s.



Opposite page: Daniella Kerner, *The Separation*, Havdalah Set, sterling silver, copper, acrylic, 21x11½x6½"; **above:** Ilya Schor, *Spice Tower*. Photo: © Sotheby's

The esthetics of Jewish ceremonial art was revolutionized in 1931, at the Berlin Museum of Arts and Crafts, where a young sculptor/metalsmith, Ludwig Wolpert exhibited a silver and ebony Seder (Passover) dish. It was a pure expression of the spare, geometric, functionalist style that we now associate with the Bauhaus in particular and modernism in general. With this piece, Wolpert initiated a radically new style in the design of the ceremonial object. He believed the design of those objects should not be rooted in the past but should reflect the esthetic personality of the period as interpreted by the artist. Wolpert became the first widely known artist to make ceremonial Judaica a life work rather than the focus of an occasional commission. In 1933, Wolpert fled Nazi Germany and arrived in Palestine, where he joined the faculty of the Bezalel school. His reputation eventually grew to international scope.

In the years following World War II, a boom in synagogue construction in the United States led to an increased demand for ceremonial art. Dr. Abram Kanof, who in the early 50s was chairman of the board of the Jewish Museum in New York, saw the opportunity to rejuvenate the design of ceremonial objects. He anticipated that contemporary religious architecture would require a suitable style of synagogue art.

He also believed that the availability of modern domestic ceremonial objects might encourage young people to maintain their religious identity and continue to observe the traditional ceremonies at home.

In 1956, with the financial support of Dr. Kanof and his wife, Dr. Frances Pascher, the Jewish Museum opened the Tobe Pascher Workshop. To guarantee that the "modernist" style would prevail, the Museum invited Ludwig Wolpert to teach and be the workshop director. Since the execution of one-of-a-kind pieces by hand was slow and expensive, prototypes for mass production were preferred, and Wolpert did these, as well as numerous commissions.

When Wolpert died in 1981, Moshe Zabari, who had been his student in Israel, was appointed workshop director. Wolpert's daughter, Chava W. Richard, a designer and

enamelist, and Harold Rabinowitz, a former workshop student, are currently in residence. Richard designs prototypes for production and Rabinowitz concentrates on individual pieces. The workshop now offers two $500 fellowships a year for selected candidates who are already technically proficient and want to learn the specifics of ceremonial art. In my opinion, the contemporary style in Jewish ceremonial art in America began with the arrival of Ludwig Wolpert and Chava Richard and was reinforced in 1961 when Moshe Zabari came to assist Wolpert. They were unique in another respect; no other craftsmen at the time were limiting their practice to the design and execution of Judaica. The Tobe Pascher Workshop was the first in this country and remains the only one in the world exclusively devoted to ceremonial art.

I have devoted a lot of space to the workshop, but some mention should be made of other craftsmen working during the early years of the movement. Ilya Schor was active during the 40s and 50s. He was the only important ceremonial artist at the time, until the arrival of Wolpert. His style was distinctive and at odds with the Modernist Movement. His surfaces were executed using a combination of shallow repoussé, piercing and engraving. They were ornamented with Hebrew lettering and caricaturelike human figures, animals, birds, fish and foliage. His imagery is reminiscent of the work of Marc Chagall and relies on Eastern European Jewish folklore and Biblical material.

Kurt Matzdorf has been deeply involved with ceremonial work since the 50s. Considering the comparative youth of the American ceremonial art movement, Matzdorf ranks as one of the pioneers, as does the late Maxwell Chayat, who used a flame-shaped motif often enough to make it a signature of his work.

This brief overview of Jewish ceremonial art production in America is intended only to establish a context for the following discussion of the "Ten by Ten" show. A history of the field from colonial times to the present has not been written. If such a study is undertaken, I would anticipate that a surprising amount of unknown work would come to light.

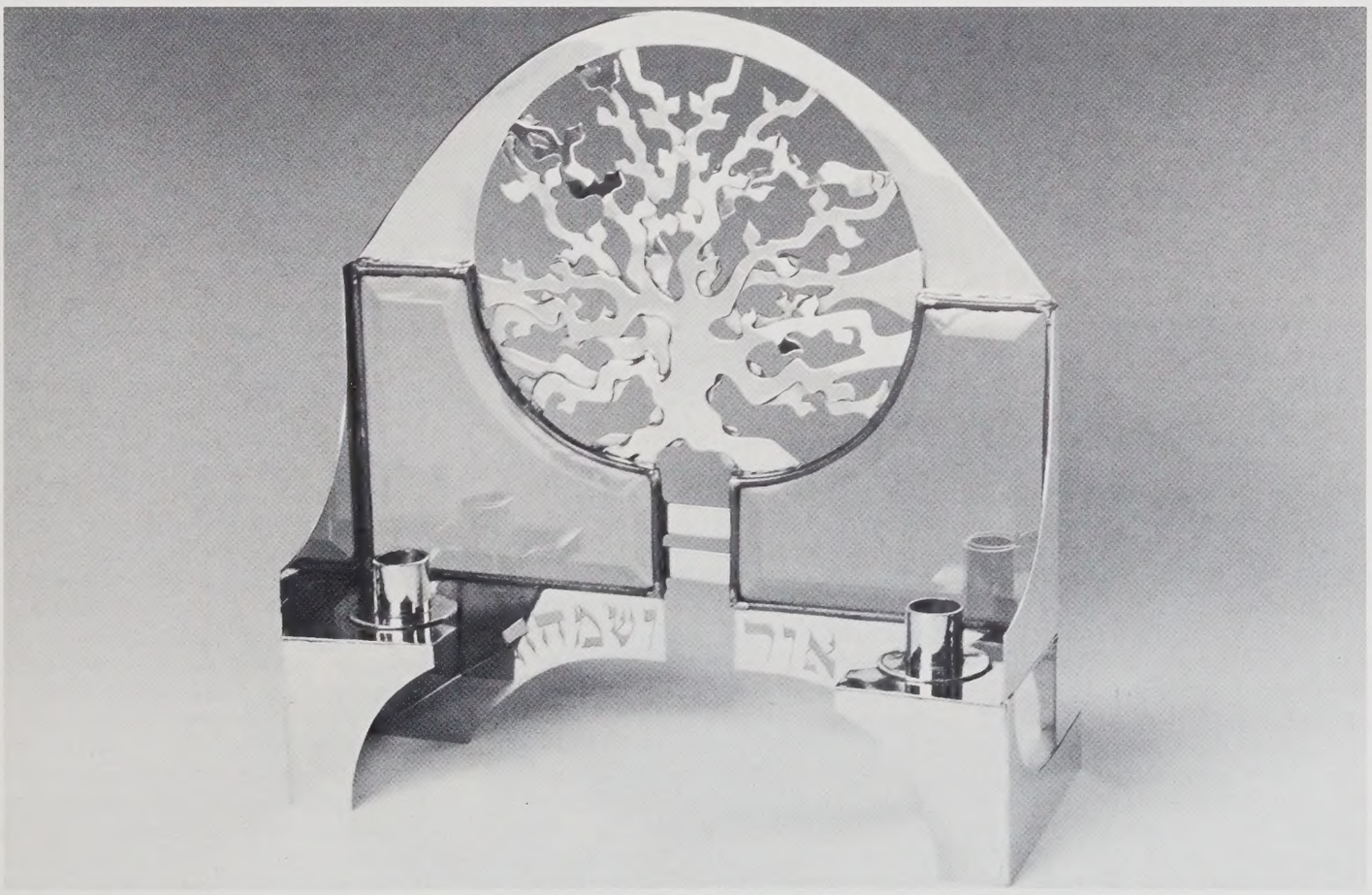
The Jewish Ceremonial Object Today

The National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia is a small museum with a big heart. Unlike the larger Jewish museums in New York, it chooses to pay enthusiastic attention to the recent and historically unprecedented flowering of interest among craftsmen in the making of Judaica.

Recently when I was there, four different exhibitions were in progress: a historical exhibit consisting mostly of photographs, the permanent exhibit of ceremonial art, the gift shop display and the "Ten by Ten" show. The theme of the show was to invite 10 stellar artists to submit one of their best pieces that exemplify today's finest Jewish ceremonial art. It involved imagination and confidence to mount this show, since Jewish ceremonial art is historically conservative.

Most of the rituals are hundreds, sometimes thousands of years old. The clientele has a justifiable fear of the rituals losing some of their sanctity if the objects appear to stray too much from familiar forms. Economic concerns have an impact. Handmade work is expensive and silver, the traditional material, adds to the cost. There is a predictable tendency on the part of the purchaser to protect his investment by avoiding work that seems extreme. Sometimes there are restrictions on a design based on Jewish lore or law. Tradition calls for a marriage of the

Ludwig Y. Wolpert, *Passover Set*, silver, glass, ebony, replica of 1930 set. Photo: Frank J. Darmstaedter, courtesy Chava Wolpert, The Jewish Museum



Top: Kurt Matzdorf, *Torah Breastplate (Tas)* and *Finials (Timmonim)*, sterling silver, acrylic, 24½x7¾x¼" and 11⅞x4" d.; **above:** Frann S. Addison, *Sabbath Candelabrum*, pewter, brass, beveled glass, 12⅛x11⅝x3¼"

beautiful, the legal and the practical, and, if the restrictions are not honored, the object becomes ritually unacceptable.

In the case of the "Ten by Ten" exhibit, the museum got what it wanted—a breath of fresh air, a departure from conservative canon. What follows is my reaction and interpretation of the pieces on exhibit.

Kurt Matzdorf's silver and acrylic Torah finials and shield use historical iconography in a decorative though modern style. For instance, there are two basic motifs dominant in the traditional design of Torah finials. One is architectural, essentially a tall bell-tower, or campanile, form. The other is the bulbous form inspired by the pomegranate, an important Middle Eastern and Biblical symbol. Matzdorf has selected the familiar pomegranate form with crown on top and bells below. The use of 12 tribal symbols, each contained within a tent-shaped frame, also indicates that he has taken the time to do the necessary research into Jewish symbolism. I found myself questioning the use of the glossy, colored plexiglass in combination with what is essentially a historically based design in silver. The use of vitreous enamels may have reinforced the image of sumptuousness and skillful execution projected by the pieces, while the plastic creates ambiguity because it is an industrial material known for its pejorative connotation. Possibly Matzdorf wanted to impart a contemporary look to the design, but for me the effect is one of conflict.

Frann Addison pioneered the use of beveled glass and pewter. Its nostalgic overtones appeal to the reverence for tradition, an important component of ceremonial art, yet the effect remains up-to-date. Addison has succeeded in achieving the best of both worlds. Her Sabbath candelabrum takes its formal cue from the architectural motif of a traditional bench-style Hanukah lamp. The glass shapes reinforce the architectural theme and reflect the candlelight to create an aura of intimacy. Technically, the use of pewter sheets that are too thin weaken the piece visually and structurally. The design is based on flat surfaces, yet they are rippled, and the thin, knifelike edges are not in proportion to the size of the object. Esthetic and technical indecision is projected when corners that should be 90 degrees, edges that should be straight and surfaces that should be flat are slightly off the mark. It gives the impression that the attempt was made but just missed. On the other hand, a deviation from a form that clearly does not attempt perfection is never noticed. To Addison's credit, her piece was the only metal object in the show using Hebrew lettering. Traditional pieces almost always had inscriptions whose lettering was handled in a straightforward, unimaginative manner. But silversmiths' goals were different then. Ludwig Wolpert made the Hebrew alphabet an art form, using it as symbol, ornament, communication and structure. If Frann Addison is going to continue to use the alphabet, I think it would be profitable to avoid depending on a standard, one-style-fits-all letter form and to let the style of the object suggest the style of the calligraphy, just as the function of the object suggests the content of the inscription in the first place.

Janet Dash's articulated Hanukah lamp, consisting of four horizontally linked triangles, is a clever and attractive addition to the family of ceremonial objects including those that fold up for traveling and the do-it-yourself design, which one can alter by rearranging the parts. To chop up thin metal sheet on a squaring shear like paper and to cut off lengths of off-the-shelf metal tubing like sausage, and to solder it together, is to abdicate responsibility for the design. Metalsmithing is time-consuming and expensive, but the design will go on living for centuries after the time and money spent have been forgotten. To hold back is to guarantee that the piece won't make it. The esthetic promise of this unusual object was betrayed by its thinness, the use of as-is stock shapes and the mechanical weakness of its linkage system. It sits on the edge of being a three-dimensional maquette in paper that happens to be executed in silver. Now, that's expensive!

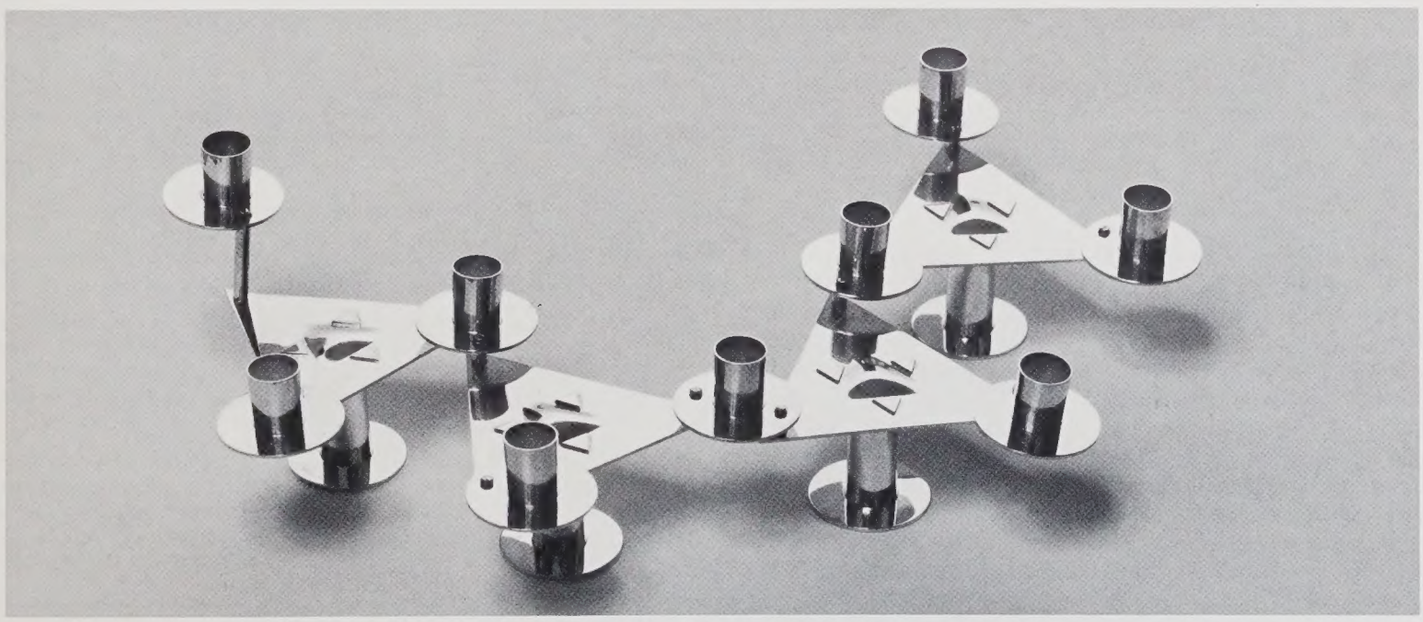
David Aronson's limited-edition sculpture is a large (17¼″) gold-plated cast bronze Hanukah lamp. It bears a title *Angels of Light* and makes use of the archetypal Menorah form. Aronson's lamp has four semicircular concentric branches radiating from a thick, rather clumsy-looking central column. That column, resembling a tree trunk, may have taken its form from the "tree of life" theme, to which the Menorah of the Bible, with its seven foliate branches, is related. The symbolism is apt but the column still lacks grace. Distributed in front of the arms of the candelabrum, obscuring much of it, and apparently dangling in space, is a group of modern "angels" with skirts flapping, like middle-aged matrons doing a frantic imitation of Mary Poppins. The branches have sockets for candles, so the piece is functional, yet there is a "neither-fish-nor-fowl" quality about it. It wants to be a functional ritual object but it doesn't want to relinquish the undeniable status that goes with the territory owned by sculpture. The use of figurative imagery, either flat, in relief or in the round is very common in traditional Jewish ceremonial objects, in spite of the Second Commandment's proscription against the making of graven images. This is not the problem. Aronson has focused on the human figure in his work as a sculptor and handled it with sensitivity, humor and imagination, as well as skill. The problem is that there is a difference between a sculptural Hanukah lamp and a sculpture-as-Hanukah-lamp, wherein the lamp aspect, with its candle sockets, is treated as a kind of afterthought, secondary to the sculpture. Aronson's use of a stereotyped Menorah motif as background for the sculptured angels supports this interpretation.

Leon Lugassy's Lulav holder is a place to rest the Lulav, a palm branch about three feet long, bound together with willow and myrtle sprays. The Lulav is an indispensible part of the ancient Succoth festival, but when it is not being carried it has no resting place. Lugassy's solution, a wooden organic form with Art Nouveau styling, complements the agricultural spirit of the festival.

Sharon Norry submitted a Torah case, which is a container for the Torah scroll used by some Sephardic (Spanish) congregations. Traditional Middle Eastern versions were usually made of heavily repousséd silver laid over a wooden carcass. A pair of Torah finials usually projected from its top. Norry simplified the design by using a plain cylindrical form and substituted textile for silver. The minimal character of the form is balanced by a colorful and energetic needlepoint representation of the familiar symbol of hands giving the priestly blessing. This is rendered in a geometric, abstract style, which is a refreshing departure from the trite anatomically literal version usually seen in commercial work. It is a good example of the use of well-known iconography in new, subtle, visually exciting ways.

Stanley Lechtzin's cast acrylic Mezuzah typifies some important aspects of his style: the intense exploration and adaptation of modern industrial processes and materials, the impulse to innovate, technically and esthetically, to constantly stretch the boundaries imposed by convention, to execute work with skill that exceeds human expectations. So, it is not a surprise that the Mezuzah is a bravura statement. The piece is essentially a violet rectangular block of acrylic 15½″h by 10⅜″w by 4⅜″d. It rests on a low, slightly smaller base, has a flat top and vertically oriented flutes that have been milled into the corners and the back surface. The fluting is intended to suggest a column, which, in turn, relates to a door post. The word Mezuzah means "doorpost." There are embedments in the cast acrylic: the Hebrew passage from the Bible in white calligraphy, two stalks of wheat bordering the inscription and what appears to be light-colored plastic foam filling the bottom third of the block.

Because of its monumental size, the Lechtzin Mezuzah departs radically from the doorpost context of the traditional object and thus also excludes itself from conventional forms of evaluation and criticism applied to these artifacts. If I look at it as a Mezuzah, it evokes mostly negative reactions, because it is pretentiously oversized compared with traditional Mezuzahs. If I look at it as sculpture, my attitude is more positive. The basis for ritual objects as found in the Talmud is the enhancement of religious rituals. There is no implication that the ceremonial object should divert attention from the religious experience itself. On the con-



Top: David Aronson, *Angels of Light*, Hanukkah Menorah, gold plate, bronze, 16½x17¼x7". Courtesy Pucker Safria Gallery, Boston, MA; **above:** Janet Dash, *Hannukkah Lamp (Hannukiyah)*, sterling silver, 14k gold, brass tubing, 2½x10¾x3¼" (open)

trary, there are customs and practices designed to discourage a shift of concentration away from the observation.

This Mezuzah because of its size, color, the calligraphy floating in space, its ethereal glowing presence, its almost jukebox optical qualities and shape, maybe even its subtle suggestion of a sacrificial altar from another planet, announces the presence of the artist and takes on a life and importance of its own. It almost wants to be worshipped itself, like a graven image.

Traditional Judaism does not encourage asceticism and irrational self-denial, but it also frowns on excess. The fact that excess and misdirection of priorities exist in life is easy enough to see in the way some Bar Mitzvahs are celebrated. Unfortunately, the significance of the Bar Mizvah, the leading of a consecrated life, seemed to shrink at the same rate as the big party grew. The sense of proportion has somehow been compromised. In Lechtzin's Mezuzah, the small size of the inscription in relation to the large size of the block indicates a similar disproportion.

A Mezuzah is a small container, usually not more than a few inches long, that is often made of inexpensive materials such as wood, brass or tin plate. An extravagant one might be made of silver, but its size prevents it from taking on airs. It contains a small parchment scroll and is attached to the right hand doorpost of a Jewish home. The inscription on the scroll is the affirmation of faith, and the object of the Mezuzah itself is to serve as a reminder of that. Its function as a reminder is more easily carried out if it is placed where it will be seen often, so one of the places where the Bible said these beliefs were to be affixed was the doorpost.

Strictly speaking, the Lechtzin Mezuzah being too massive to fit on a doorpost, is not a Mezuzah. The absence of a handlelettered parchment scroll also renders it nonkosher, not fit for ritual use. If the intent and not the letter of the Biblical law is considered, then this impressive object is an important contribution to the ongoing process of thinking about traditional forms in untraditional ways. If I picture it installed in the average home, I get vibrations similar to those evoked by the image of the opulent Bar Mitzvah; the ratio of pomp to piety seems unbalanced. The scale of the piece demands an appropriate setting, and my personal vision of a house of worship as a place for religious art as well as prayer would be satisfied if this Mezuzah-as-sculpture would be placed, along with other Judaic art in a synagogue or temple.

Daniella Kerner's Havdalah set *The Separation* presents a similar set of philosophical problems. Havdalah means "separation" in Hebrew. It refers to the separation between the Sabbath, a holy day of rest, and the other days of the week. The sacredness of the Sabbath is emphasized by putting a frame around it, so that the symmetry of the frame consists of a ritual that marks the beginning of the Sabbath on Friday at sundown, and the Havdalah ceremony, that marks its end on Saturday evening. The ritual involves the sipping of wine, lighting of a braided candle and inhaling the aroma of spices. Special blessings are recited before each of these acts. The traditional ritual accessories to the service are a wine cup, a candle holder and a spice container. These are often kept in a tray, which only serves as an organizing utensil. The mood of the ritual is warm, friendly, neither riotously joyful, like the Purim hilarity, or melancholy, like that on Yom Kippur. There may be a touch of sadness at the departure of the "Sabbath Bride," but that is as far as it goes.

Kerner's Havdalah set is physically similar to the Lechtzin Mezuzah. It is a large, rectangular block of clear cast acrylic. It also has embedments and includes four electroformed metal objects that fit in or on the block. It is not easy to determine which one serves which purpose without studying the piece. There is no indication that it is a Jewish ritual object. As to the absence of any identifying lettering or symbols, there are no laws that require this in a Havdalah set, nor do the pieces need to telegraph their function. But logic demands an answer to this question: Why bother going to the trouble and expense of making a ceremonial object, especially a very large one, if an ordinary salt shaker can serve as a spice container and sacramental wine can be sipped from a drinking glass? A decision to avoid the use of indentifying iconography is a personal matter. An artist may argue that he compensates for this by designing the forms to make the ritual use clear. But in this Havdalah set, the three functioning parts are stacked to form a single column. Therefore, instead of suggesting their function, they obscure it further. The result is that the object had the opportunities to identify itself and it didn't. This invites the viewer to interpret its message in a projective way, based on what is visible, like an ink blot test.

The metal parts are electroformed copper with a very nodular coarse texture that does not invite touching. You would not want to put the wine cup to your lips. The forms are minimal, geometric, cold and forbidding. The color of the metal is rusty, and since three of the forms resemble tin cans, the combination of form, texture and color speaks of decay and disintegration. The contrast with the pristine, precise purity of the clear plastic augments the quality of each. The three stacked cylinders fit into a hole in the acrylic block. The first image that came to mind was of the radioactive fuel rods suspended in the water of a nuclear reactor. The embedded material at the bottom of the block has two layers. The top appears to be the same light-colored foamy substance Lechtzin used in his Mezuzah. The lower layer is darker and as it approaches the bottom of the block, it turns to a funereal black. My immediate reaction to the light foam was that it suggested illness; it resembled used surgical cotton piled in the bottom of a waste can. The black material, which is very granular, echoing the texture of the electroforms, looked like ashes.

The message of this piece, delivered by its formal attributes, spoke to me of a catastrophic event rather than a warm, family-centered ceremony. In this respect I applaud Kerner's talent for creating powerful, emotionally moving images.

I also saw the object as another, currently popular craft exercise, the metaphor for a functional object that doesn't function. Because of their content, ceremonial objects are already metaphors and they raise the question: Why give up usefulness in order to achieve iconographic liberation, when the treasure house of images and the freedom already exist?

The Lechtzin Mezuzah, which is made of essentially the same material and has essentially the same size and shape does qualify as a ceremonial object because it has a Jewish reference and in order to function, it merely has to be visible. Its abnormal size, which may unsettle traditionalists, actually enhances its function, while the same exaggeration in size of the Havdalah set interferes with its function because it has to be used as well as seen. The somber mood it projects may not be in keeping with the tone of the ritual but at least the physical aspects of the piece should permit it to be used comfortably.

The National Museum of American Jewish History rates bouquets for this show on several counts: for selecting a group of artists whose work covered a wide-enough spectrum of orientations to make the exhibit stimulating; for taking the risk in showing work that was sure to jolt the responses of visitors who may have come with expectations rooted in past experiences of ceremonial art; and for being willing to remain almost alone among museums in committing itself to showing, on a continuing basis, what the new breed of ceremonial artists is accomplishing.

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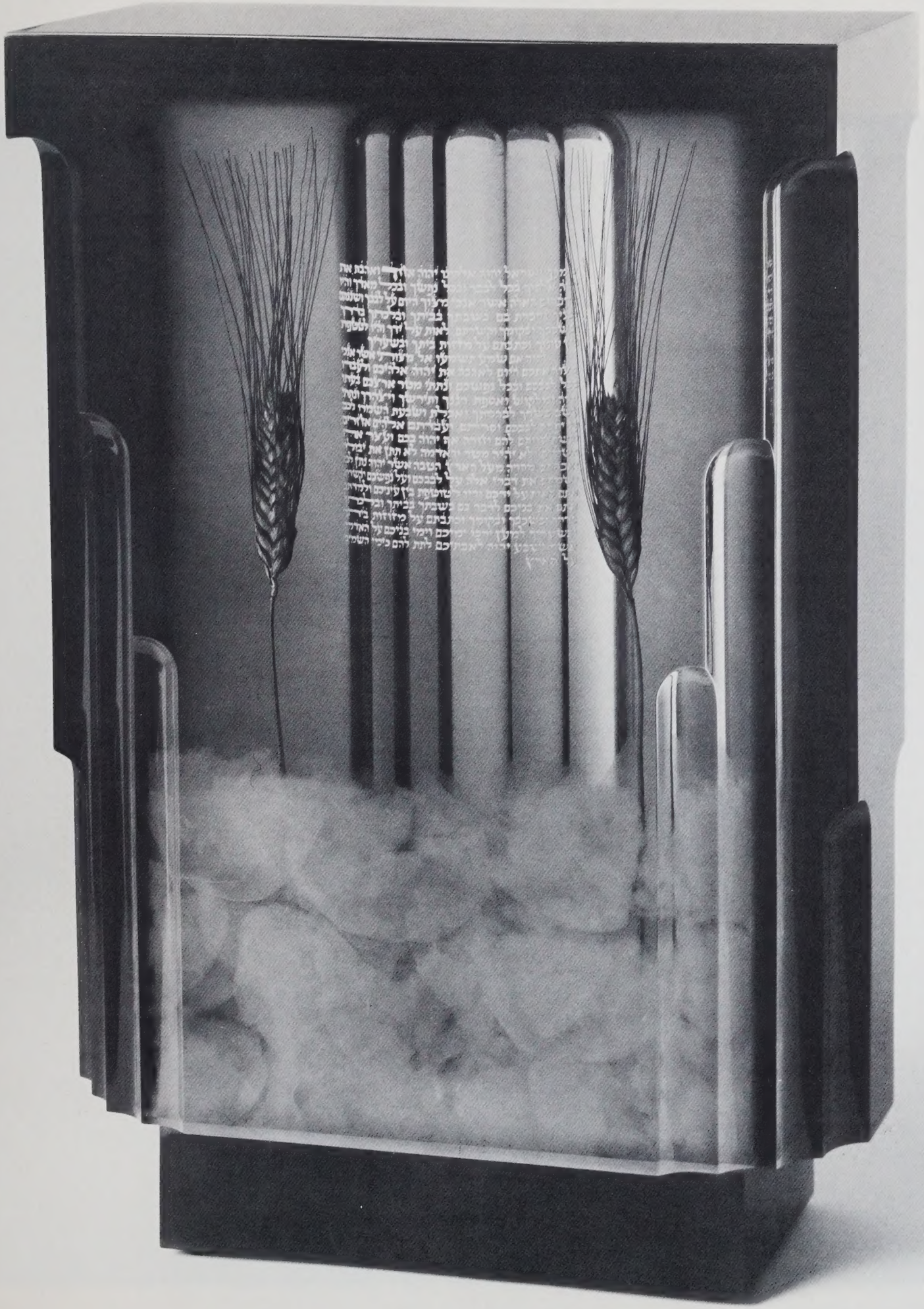
"Ten by Ten," Sixth Annual Invitational Craft Exhibition, National Museum of American Jewish History, 55 North 5th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106, November 16–December 31, 1986. An illustrated catalog is available free from the museum

Bernard Bernstein is a retired professor of metalworking and design at City College in New York, who studied the history of Torah ornaments for both his M.F.A. and Doctorate. He now designs and executes Jewish ceremonial work exclusively.

Opposite: Stanley Lechtzin, *Mezuzah*, cast acrylic with wheat embedments, 15½x10⅛x4⅜". Photos: Will Brown, courtesy National Museum of American Jewish History, unless otherwise noted



LESLIE LEUPP

Exploring the Possibilities

by Elizabeth Skidmore Sasser

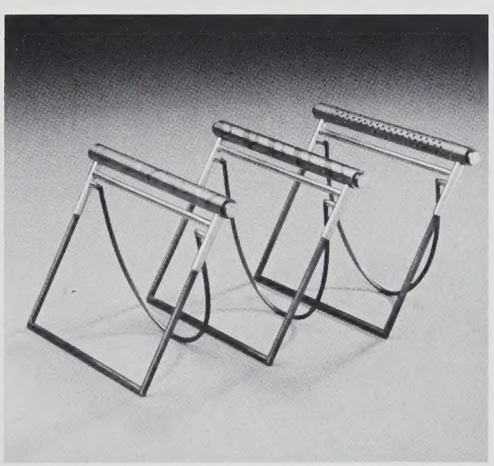
. . . Recycling all possible idioms now in circulation within the experience of our lives. Recuperating decoration and color as signs of freedom and nobility of creative invention . . . concentrating on an effective relationship between man and his things . . .

—Andrea Branzi[1]

A year before the first appearance of the Memphis collection at the Milan Furniture Fair in 1981, Leslie Leupp was collecting materials from hardware stores and welding shops for a series of bracelets. Of this period he says, "I wanted to use patterns and color; I was intrigued with angles and planes. It was a time when things were popping in the fields of metal and jewelry design: roller printing, photoetching, the use of titanium and aluminum, the marriage of metals, the anodizing process. Attitudes and philosophies were also changing. It was no longer necessary to consider the size of a diamond or how much gold was required for a piece of jewelry, so why not use plastics?" Leupp, like the emerging Memphis group, had already transcended the barrier between so-called "high" and "low" materials and had chosen to make the "antihierarchical gesture" of appreciating the ignored or unrealized elegance of the commonplace. He had begun a continuing romance with bits of patterned linoleum, formica, vinyl, plastic stones, knitting needles, coils and tubes of colored plastics. This pointed the way to textural combinations as unpredictable in their impact as a Zen *koan*.

The choice of nontraditional materials for jewelrymaking was linked by Leupp to an interest in the possibilities of suspension. During the early 80s, this resulted in a bracelet series held on the wrist by elastic threaded through plastic. Putting on a Leupp bracelet became a problem of subtle adjustments. "The thing that interested me in these pieces," he says, "is that arranging the bracelet on the arm of the wearer is a two-person procedure, which I think is nice. You can put it on by yourself, but it's easier if someone helps you."

Unlike earrings or a brooch, a bracelet presents the challenge of containment in wearing, as well as of entry and exit—putting on and taking off. A brooch may reach out into space, but, as in the false door of an Egyptian tomb chamber, it does not penetrate inward, nor does it enclose. A bracelet provides what Leupp refers to as "a space in which to work." There is an involvement with both void and solid. Differing from a ring, which shares the bracelet's negative and positive aspects but is lodged firmly on a finger, a design encircling the wrist may shift and move. Taking advantage of this kinetic factor, Leupp has constructed a large, round, almost flat bracelet with a square opening at the center; it is reminiscent of the Chinese coins sewn on a lady's "work basket" at the turn of the century. The black patinated metal is bordered by a fretwork of delicately riveted bars like the patterns on Chinese balustrades. Depending on light and motion, the bracelet casts changing shadows over the skin and clothing, thus modifying the severity and restraint of the design while adding a new spatial dimension.



Photos by Robert Suddarth

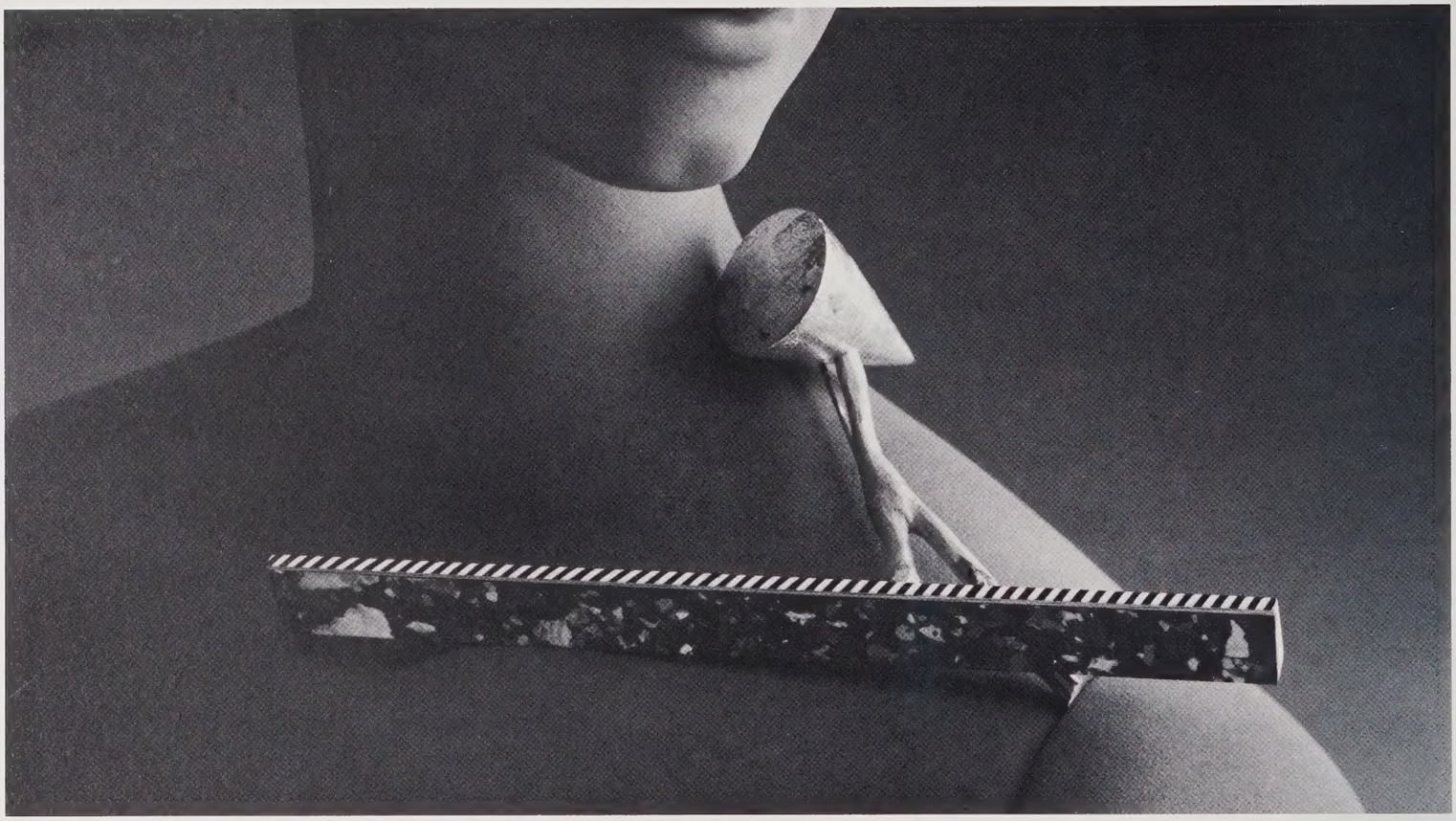
Opposite page: *Birds of a Feather* (revised), steel, nickel, wood, niobium, 12x15x5½"; **top:** Leslie Leupp; **above:** *Three Bracelets*, steel, titanium, aluminum, 3¼x2¾x¼", 1982

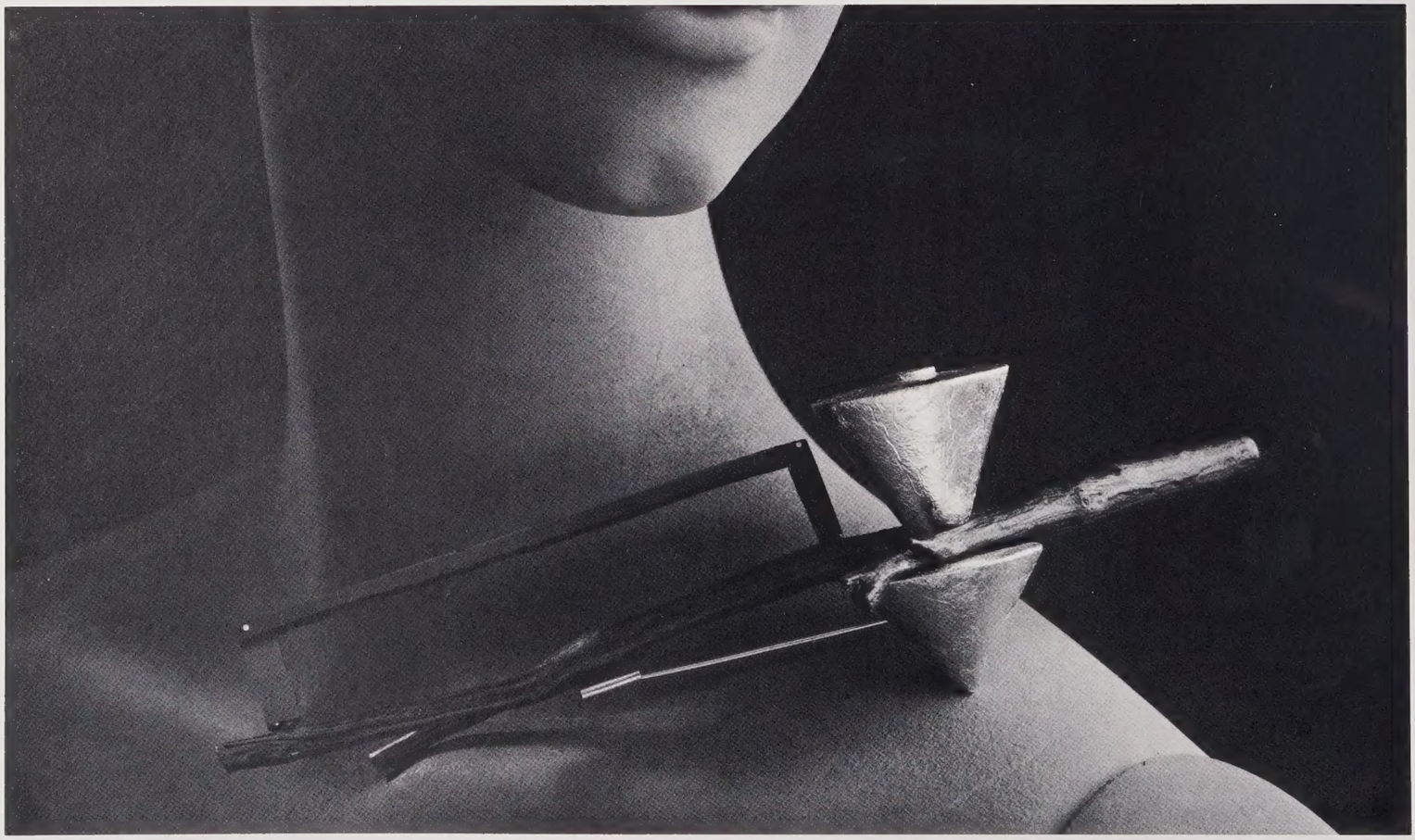
Geometric figures are dominant in Leupp's work. A bracelet might be a circle that lies flat on top of the wrist, held in a square frame by a rectangular bar of richly textured linoleum. A circle of plastic, flattened slightly on top, might invite the hand to be drawn through a round opening, where the arm will be clasped by elastic attached to small knobs that exert the proper tension. *Nine Bracelets in a Series—Suspended* employs tension and suspension in a different manner. The bracelets, made of gold-plated brass brazing rods, each displaying a variation upon a rectangle, are intended to be worn together or separately. When removed, they may be attached by small springs to an architectonic frame. Recalling a child's jungle gym or a vertical maze, the design is handsome as a whole and enhances the pleasure enjoyed by the parts. "This kind of presentation," Leupp explains, "gives the viewer another approach to jewelry, that of object." The intimate scale pleases the artist; he intends that his work should be assembled, disassembled, touched, picked up and enjoyed in all of its varied aspects.

From time to time, Leupp turns his attention to pieces that are not intended to be worn. The whimsical *Broken Umbrella Series*, in three pieces, brings together wooden ribs covered with paper, like a Japanese fan, and cast concrete parts. The contrast of natural materials with industrial products produces a parallel between Leupp's sensitivity to contrasts and Robert Venturi's observation that "a feeling for paradox allows seemingly dissimilar things to exist side by side, their very incongruity suggesting a kind of truth."[2]

Birds of a Feather Revised, an Alice-in-Wonderland collection of feathered creatures dangling head down, like croquet mallets, also introduces striking contradictions. Geometric niobium forms are at the upper ends of the slender steel rods to which the cut-out birds are fastened. Leupp describes the effect as the play of rigid geometry against the amorphism of the birds, the extinct dodo, the elegant flamingo, even the ubiquitous Woody Woodpecker, that suggests metaphors for qualities of life.

Underlying the playful sophistication of Leupp's birds, there is a hint of folk traditions. It is not surprising to discover that the artist's home is a sanctuary for American folk art: an American eagle standing on a gilded ball, baskets, doorstops, wooden matchboxes painted with feline characters by the hand of fanciers untutored in academic techniques. Quilts that





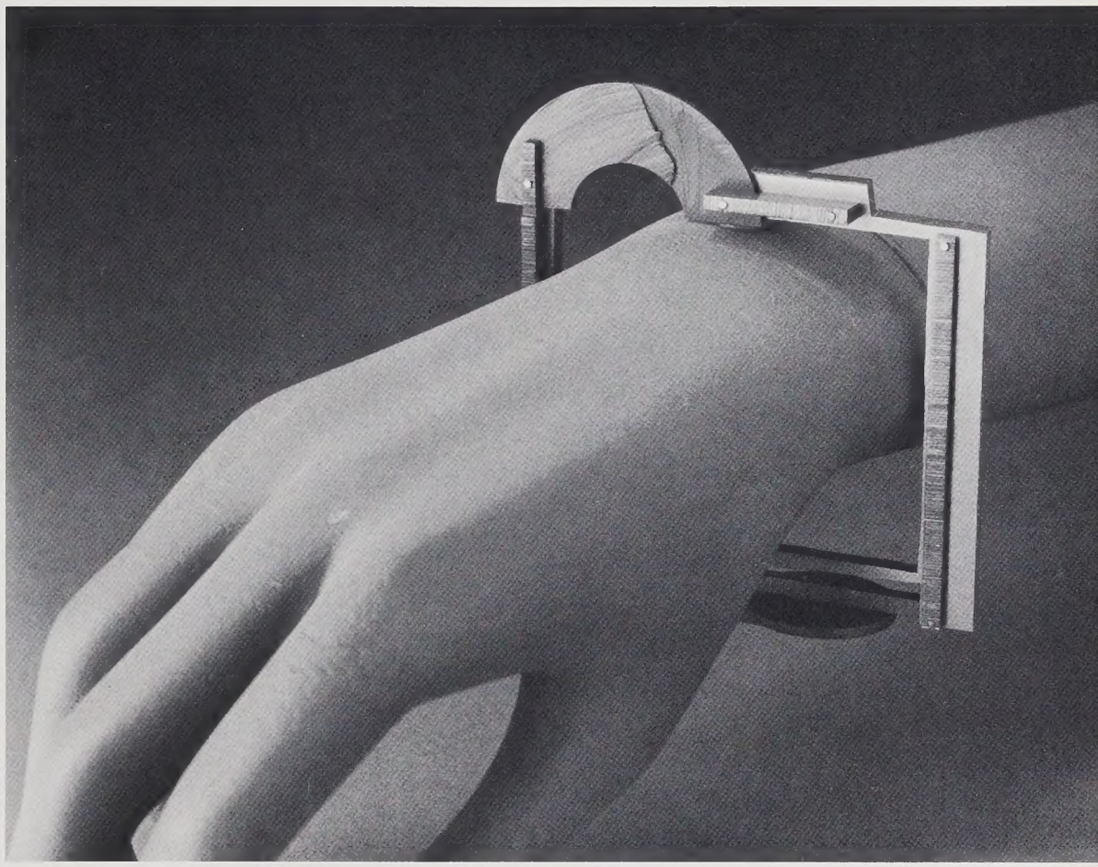
are a part of childhood memories are favorite items in the collection.

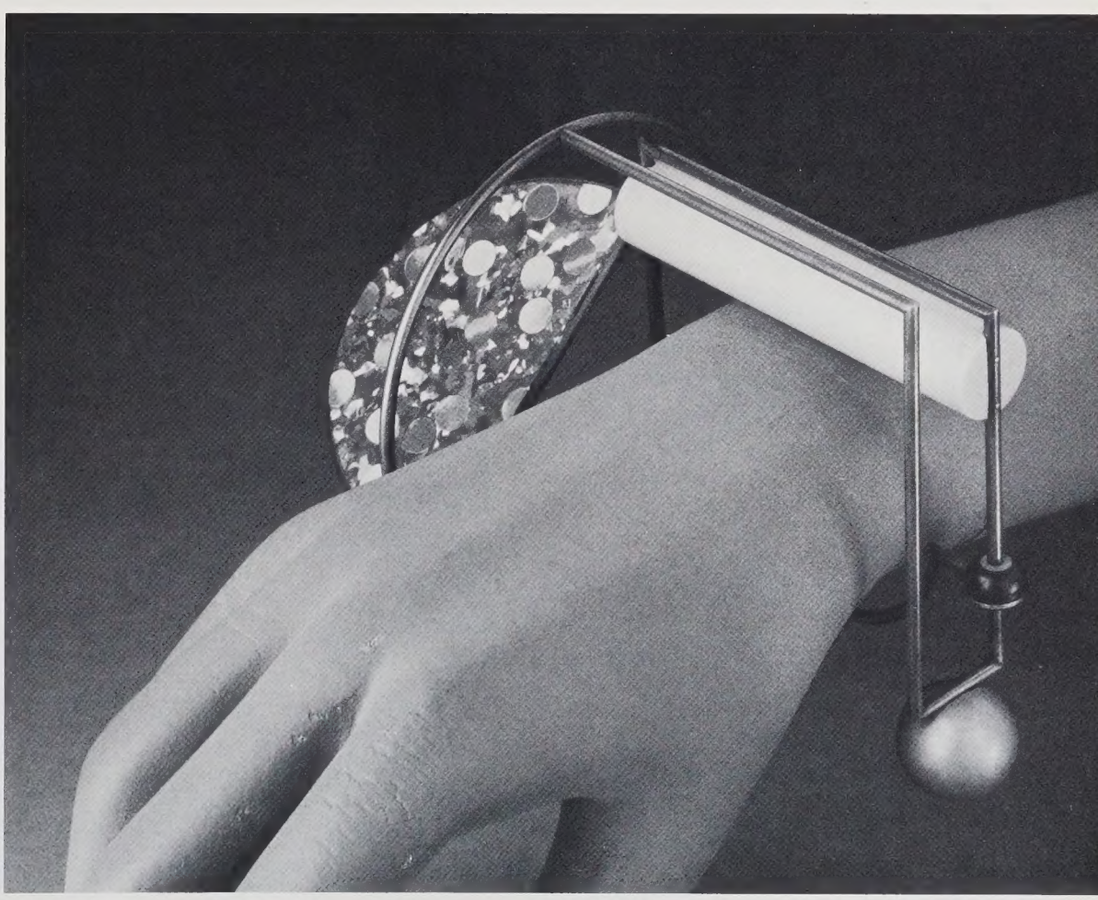
One of eight children born to Mennonite parents, Leupp grew up in a farming community in northwestern Ohio. Of the early influences affecting his work, he observes:

I was born on a farm. You worked all of the time from the moment the sun came up until it went down. I'm still a workaholic. You lived off the land, always shucking corn, picking and peeling some fruit or vegetable to can or preserve; you just didn't go to the store and get something off the shelf. The kitchen was the family meeting place. I found what happened there very interesting. I was intrigued by mixing and stirring, that is, with process, and then it would come out a chocolate cake. I was always drawing. I'd see something in a magazine and then I'd draw it. Brought up in the religion, jewelry was not worn. But I had an aunt who was more liberal. She loved costume jewelry. Once a year, she would clean out her drawers and bring a paper bag of jewelry to the four youngest children in our family. We'd divide this hoard up and each of us would have a little stash. I'd bury it like pirate's gold. I think every child must have this idea of hidden treasure and sparkling things.

Leupp believes the lack of preconceived ideas about jewelry and jewelry's traditional values is one of the strengths of his work. "Without any notions of what jewelry should be," he says, "I was free to invent it, and I still do."

Although handcrafts were not generally practiced in the Ohio community, Leupp knew a Mennonite family who made furniture. The only activity carried on in his own household was quilting. "A quilt was put in a frame," he remembers, "and for a week the women would come to our house to work on it. Children would come with them; this was a time to play hide-the-thimble and other games and then refreshments were passed around." In the circles and squares of Leupp's jewelry, in the patterns and colors, in the precision of fitting pieces together, there is a bond with the art of the quilt. Edward Lucie-Smith calls the calico spreads "the supreme expression of the folk spirit."[3] It seems odd, perhaps, to compare quilts and the jewelry of Leupp with its vigorous avant-garde approach to the 21st century, but, if you believe that where you've come from determines who you are, the filtering light of Leupp's childhood experience shines through. In this case, the quality, simplicity and integrity of a pioneer craft are inherent in his art.





Opposite above: Brooch *Internal Bleeding #1*, 8x3½x1½" paint, wood, linoleum, silver leaf, 1986; **left:** Brooch *Internal Bleeding #2*, wood, aluminum, gold leaf,, 8x2½x2"; **above:** *Bracelet #PCQ86*, aluminum, 3¼x3½x1", 1986; **right:** *Frivolous Vitality Bracelet*, steel, plastic, aluminum, linoleum, formica, 3½x5x3", 1984

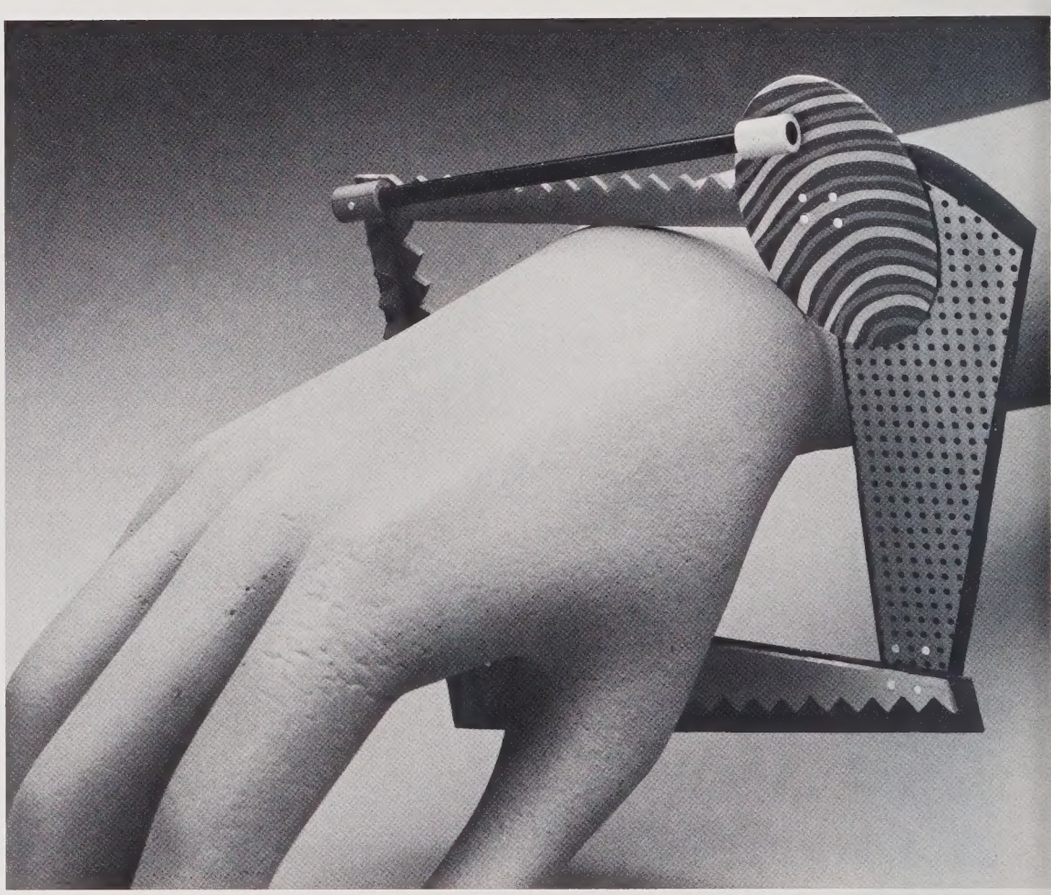
Recently, Leupp has turned his attention to brooches, which are at the opposite end of the spectrum from the high-tech manipulation of industrial materials present in the tension/suspension pieces. *Internal Bleeding #1* and *#2* make use of found branches and twigs combined with unexpected parts. In the case of *Internal Bleeding #1*, a forked stick holds a cone covered with silver leaf. The gnarled wood is attached at an angle to a straight-edged, rulerlike bar with a surface of linoleum, which looks deceptively like marble. *#2* joins straight metal prongs with a branch separating two cones overlaid with gold leaf. Now that the Midas touch is no longer greatly valued by makers of contemporary jewelry, it is a neat visual comment to discover the glimmer of gold in a bare bough. Playfulness in the dissimilarity of materials relieves the grim titles given the brooches. Whatever the interpretation, it is inevitable to wonder if the wearer at the stroke of midnight will metamorphose into a Daphne or a perverse Dryad.

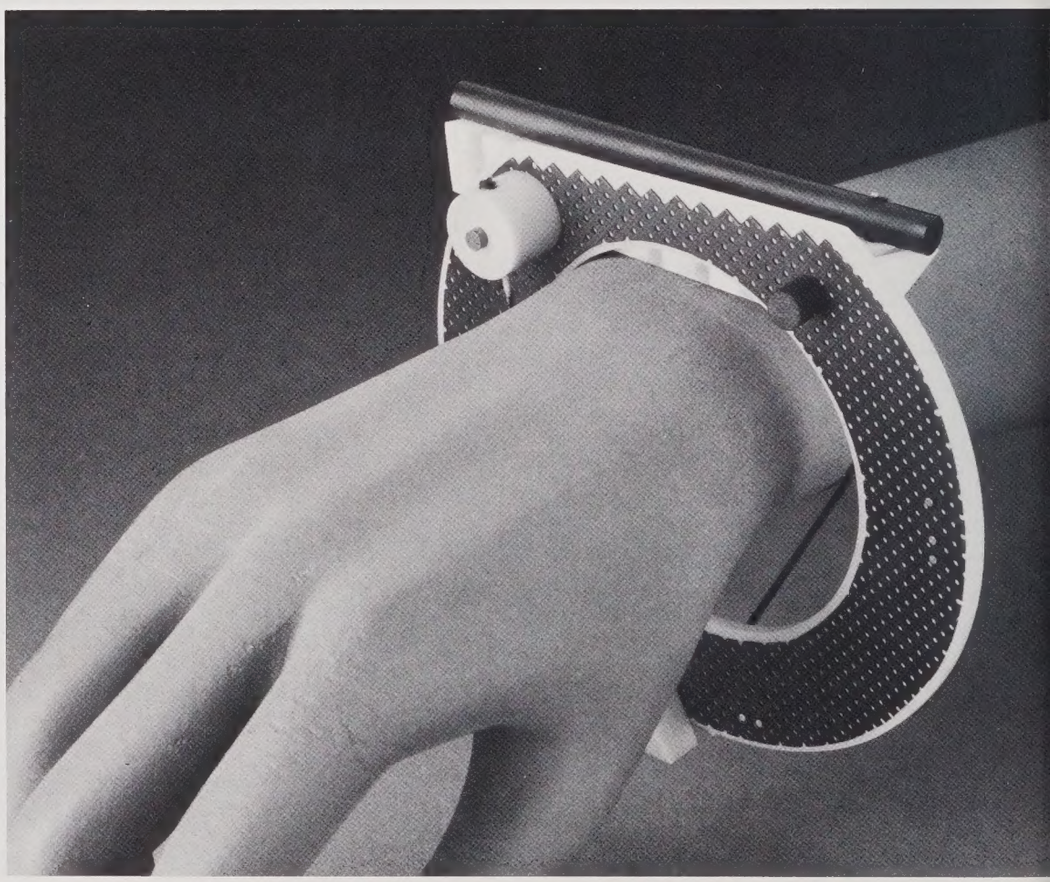
Leupp holds strong ideas on wearing his work. He points out:

People still want to put jewelry on and be very comfortable. They don't want anything to be disturbing; but that's not my work. If you put a piece of mine on, I want you to be disturbed. I want you to hold your hand in a special way for the whole evening. I want some mental and physical discomfort, a mental awareness, a commitment. I like to think that a whole occasion is built around a particular design. Here it is. It's not that you put on your clothes and try to find something to match. You select the event; you start nude; you get to pick the garment, the shoes, everything to go with the piece of jewelry. Everything's built around it; besides, when you get the bracelet or brooch on, your body can't be held in the same way it was. You are this thing now, since it changes your mental attitude as well as your physical posture.

Leupp continues, "You don't have to own the jewelry to enjoy it. I want people to see and experience my work when it is being worn." This is very close to the Navajo meaning of *hózhó*, that state of beauty transmitted by the Indian craftsman to his silver design that will, in some measure, bring both wearer and viewer into a state of harmony and balance.[4]

At present, Leupp is involved with earrings and bracelets; the color and pattern are the result of a process brought about by applying a lacquer resist to aluminum. The pieces are



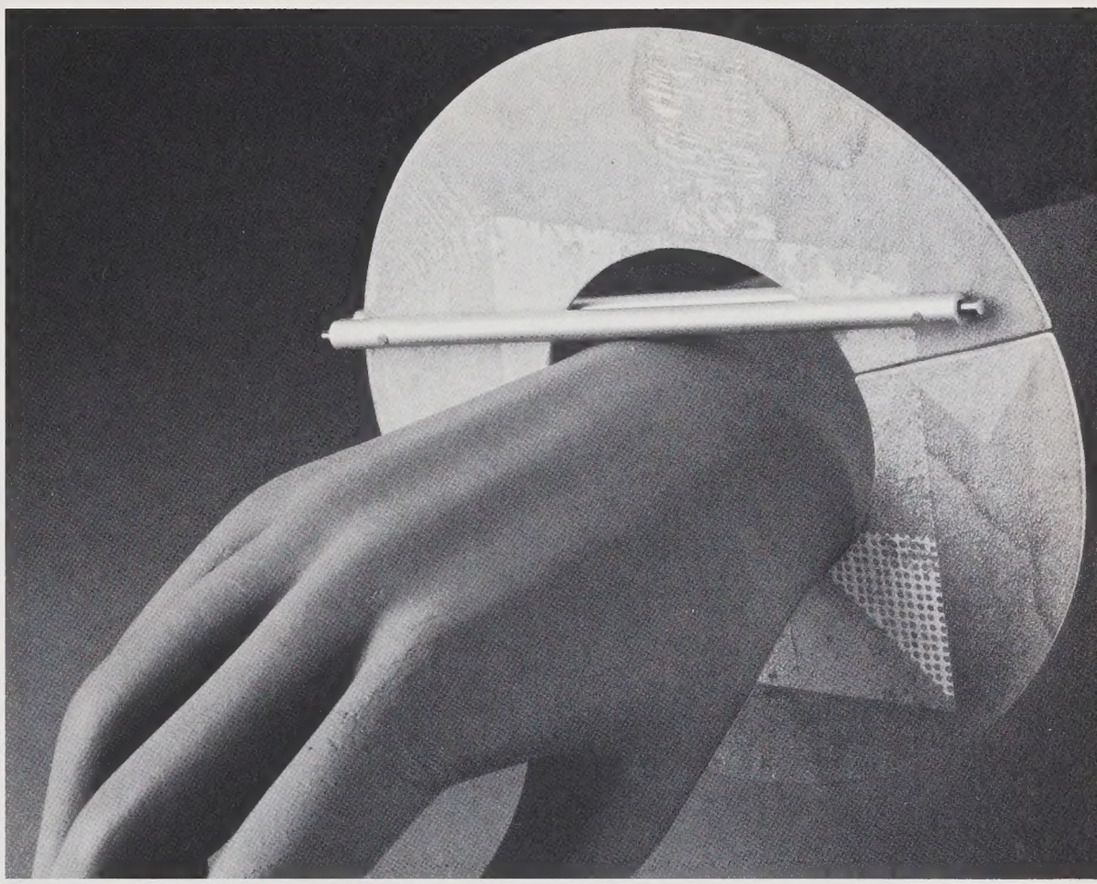


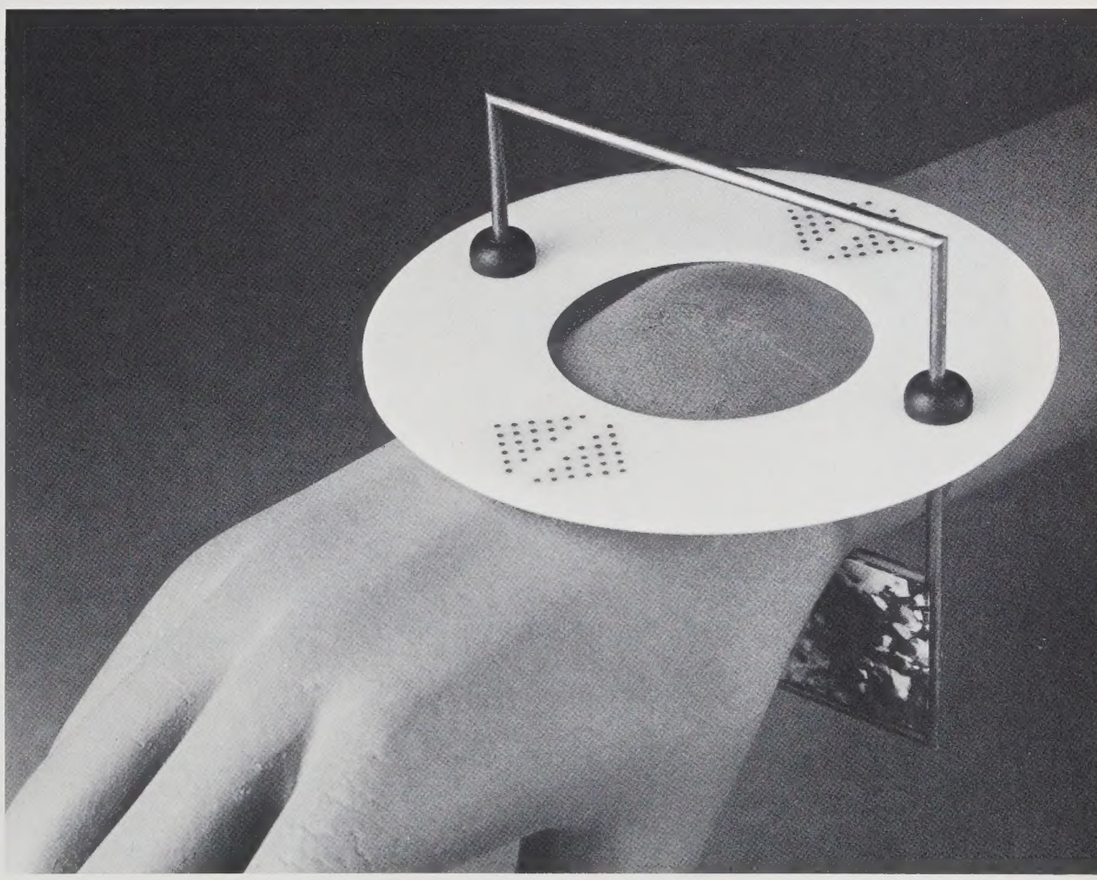
Above: *Bracelet #WG187*, aluminum, 4x4½x¼", 1987; **right:** *Bracelet #R184*, aluminum, plastic, 4½x4½x1", 1984; **opposite page, top:** *Bracelet #285*, plastic, paper, aluminum, 5½x5½x½", 1985; **right:** *Bracelet #L283*, plastic, steel, nickel, linoleum, 3x3x3¾", 1983

intense in color and exude a carnival atmosphere. "In this series," Leupp comments, "I'm leaving saw marks and cuts on some of the edges. I'm trying to loosen up and play with the human quality and even with human error in contrast to treating the metal in a slick, industrial way. I'm also continuing to explore the contrasts found in nature and in products of industry. I've been seeing things along the road that interest me and torn out walls of buildings with advertising signs projecting through the rubble." In a similar context, Venturi has noted, "The seemingly chaotic juxtaposition of honky-tonk elements expresses an intriguing kind of vitality and validity, and they produce an unexpected approach to unity as well."[5]

The basis of Leupp's philosphy is centered upon unity as a part of life and his art. He says:

My work is a part of a totality. I put the same intensity into washing dishes as I do when I'm in the studio. (The creative process) is no longer a separate anxiety that takes precedence over other activities. Rather, this process has been integrated into the total scheme of things and has become a part of my daily living . . . My work is no longer about "how?": How much does it shine and glitter? How much does it cost? How much does it weigh? The new attitude provides larger and broader issues. All materials and processes have become valid considerations to search through for solutions . . . the images presented in my work deal with more that a concern for formal design considerations, but also include a part of my psyche and daydreams. My work is about observation and contemplation. The form of the large image is used to expand and extend both the physical and mental awareness of the wearer and the viewer. As my life has become an accumulation of possibilities to investigate, my work is a response to these possibilities.





Notes

1. Quoted by Richard Horn in *Memphis: Objects, Furniture, and Patterns*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1986, p. 17
2. Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1966, p. 24
3. Paul J. Smith and Edward Lucie-Smith, *Craft Today*, New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1986, p. 18
4. *Southwest Indian Silver from the Doneghy Collection*, Louise Lincoln, ed., Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982, p. 40
5. *Op. cit.*, Venturi, p. 102

Elizabeth Skidmore Sasser is a professor of architecture at Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX and a contributing editor to *Metalsmith*.

DAMASCENING
WOVEN INLAY

CONTEMPORARY APPLICATIONS OF AN ANCIENT TECHNIQUE

by Bruce Clark

The use of area inlays, called damascening or woven inlay, is common in the ancient metalwork of Iran, India, Japan, Spain and other countries. Since most applications require the use of ferrous metals as base materials, area inlay is not often found in the fine jewelry of these cultures. Instead, it is found as ornamentation applied to objects such as swords and hardware that must be made of durable metal.

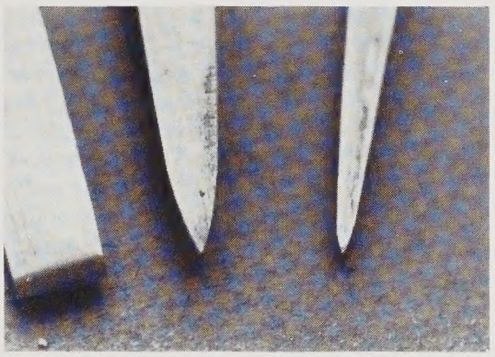
In contemporary applications, area inlay can greatly expand the range of textures and colors available to the metalsmith. In addition, the modern metalsmith is not limited to using traditional ferrous metals as base materials. Metals such as nickel, titanium, stainless steel, tool steels, sterling silver and bronze alloys may also be used. The process divides itself into four major elements: tool making, preparation of the metals, application and finishing.

Damascening Tools

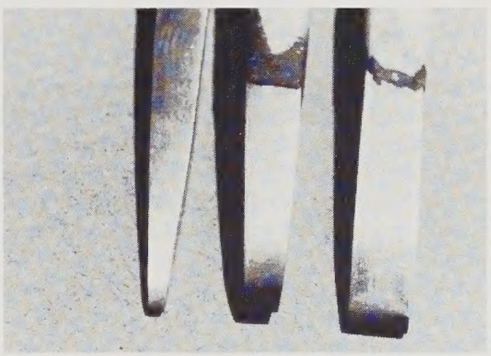
The inlay is accomplished by the mechanical application of a thin sheet of annealed metal to the surface of a harder metal base with a burred texture. The inlay technique requires simple chisels capable of cutting into the metal base. The chisels and setting tools are fashioned of tool steel shaped, polished, hardened and tempered in the traditional manner. A tool blank of 0-1 steel stock measuring ¼ to ⅜ inches square is cut to a comfortable length, about 3 to 4 inches. Square stock is preferable to round. This makes a chisel which is easier to control. The tools are rough ground on a bench grinder or a belt sander and then the shape is refined by further hand sanding. Finish work is done with sandpaper and sanding sticks. The final finish is applied with a buffing wheel and emery compound.

Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the chisel shapes required. It is important to retain as much of the thickness of the tool as possible. A slender tool may break. Using the belt sander, a more acute angle—30 to 40 degrees—is applied to the last ⅛ to ¼ inch from the cutting edge. Nearly all inlays may be executed using chisels of three sizes: 1/16 inch, ⅛ inch and ¼ inch. The tip of the tool is brought to an edge with a whetstone. The striking end of the tool is beveled to protect against chipping. A commercial rubberizing grip compound such as Tool Dip will cushion the shaft and increase control of the tool.

"Setting tools" are used to press the inlay metal into the textured base. *Figure 3* illustrates their basic form. The setting tools are made of 3/16 to ⅜ inch tool steel or brass stock. Unlike the chisels, the setting tools are made of round stock. This eases the task of making an even surface.



1. Side view of two of the chisels showing the angle of the cutting edge



2. Front view of three chisels showing relative sizes

3. Setting tools
Photos by Betty Harris

The steel tools must be hardened and tempered. The 0-1 steel is an oil-quenching stock. To harden the tool, the edge of the chisel is brought to a cherry red glow with an acetylene torch and plunged into a room temperature bath of motor oil. Swirling the tool ensures even cooling. The tool is cleaned and sanded. It is tempered by heating from the center of the shank. As the steel heats up, various oxide colors appear, indicating the temperature of the tool body. When a straw yellow (about 440°F) is seen on the tip of the chisel or setting tool, it is immediately quenched in oil. If you accidentally go past the straw color and cause a dark bronze or peacock blue, the metal will be too soft. If this happens, it will be necessary to reharden and retemper the tool. Cosmetic cleaning and polishing are optional.

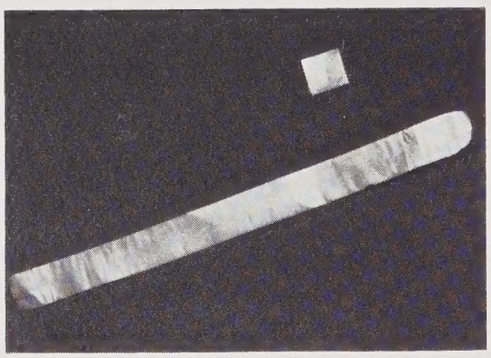
Preparation of Metals for Inlay

Most soft metals may be used for inlay, provided they are in thin sheets. The inherent softness of a metal is less important than its softness relative to the metal that will serve as a base. For instance, bronze is too hard to be inlaid easily into mild steel but may be inlaid into stainless steel. The table below lists various metals for inlays and bases. The minimum thickness for the base metal is usually 16 gauge. Titanium or stainless steel may be used in thicknesses of 20 gauge or less.

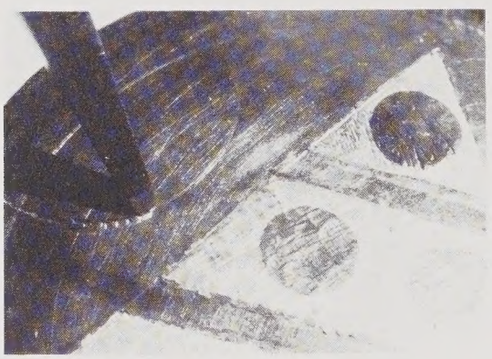
Metals for Inlay Hardest to Softest	Metals for Bases Hardest to Softest
Silicon Bronze	Titanium
Kuromi-do	Stainless Steel
Mokume	Cast Iron
Copper	Mild Steel
Fine Silver	Nickel Silver
Aluminum	Cast Bronze
Fine Gold	Silicon Bronze
Pewter/Tin	Sterling Silver
Lead	

In most cases, a rolling mill must be used to reduce the inlay metal to a thin sheet. The thickness of the fine silver and copper used in the example is 0.0025 inches. This material was obtained by rolling a 1-inch-square of 20-gauge fine silver into a ribbon roughly 1 inch wide by 13 inches long. During the rolling process, the metal must be annealed. Annealing the metal in a coil protects the edges of the strip from melting. Pickling the metal after each annealing will prevent oxides from being rolled into the material.

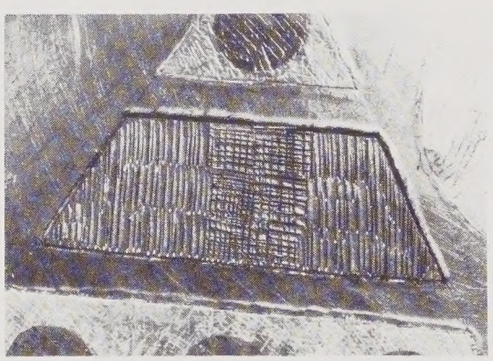
Opposite page: Komelia H. Okim, *Mid-Day No. II* and *Sunset No. II*, silver, 24k gold foil, copper, 15x11x3" and 18x9x4", 1986



4. A one-inch square of 20-gauge fine silver will roll out to 13 square inches of .0025 inlay material



5. Using the small chisel to cut a sharp outline edge; done prior to cutting the inlay texture



6. One direction of textural cuts has been applied and the second set has been started

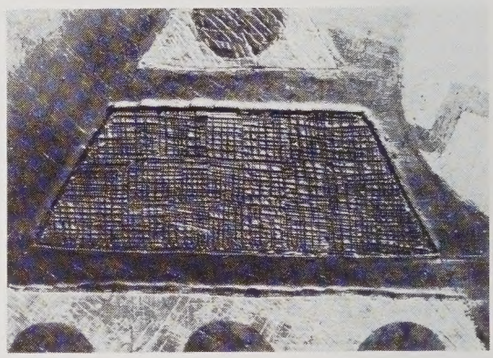
Application

The metal must be thoroughly cleaned of oils, oxidation and other contaminants. After transferring the desired image to the metal, a scribe is used to scratch the image onto the surface. One of the inlay chisels is used to outline and raise a burr defining the inlay area. The complexity of the outline dictates the width of the chisel blade used. During outlining, the chisel is held at about a 70-degree angle, slanted in such a way that the chisel's cut is directed away from the interior of the inlay region. *Figure 5* illustrates this step.

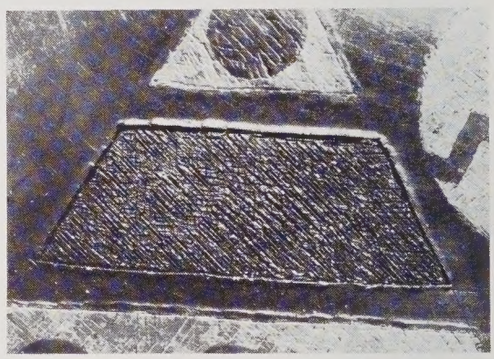
The next step is to cut a crosshatch pattern into the base metal. This pattern is created with four sets of lines cut horizontally, vertically and on the diagonals. During this process, the piece must be firmly held and backed. A steel bench block is adequate for flat pieces. Hollow objects should be filled with either hard pitch or lead. In my experience, lead is the more desirable. It's harder and doesn't crack. Naturally, adequate safety precaution should be observed when working with these materials.

The chisel is held nearly vertical, slightly above the surface of the metal (⅛ inch or less). A chasing hammer is used to drive the chisel into the base material with rapid blows. The chisel is allowed to bounce off the surface, as if it was a small jackhammer. Hammering is continued until the metal surface is completely covered with cuts. The depth of the cuts is determined by the weight of the chasing hammer. In general, the harder and thicker the inlay metal, the deeper the cuts in the metal base. Cast iron, stainless steel and titanium will chip and wear the chisels down. It may be necessary to stop occasionally to sharpen the chisels on a fine whetstone. *Figure 6* shows the pattern with cuts in one direction and the beginning of the second set. Safety glasses should be worn when working with cast iron due to its brittle nature.

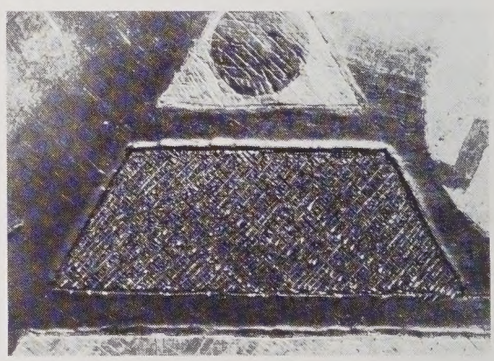
It is not advisable to texture an area larger than you can inlay at a single sitting. Oxides can build up in burrs that are left exposed. These make setting the inlay more difficult. It is best to apply the metal in single pieces no larger than a postage stamp. Larger pieces are prone to stretching, which tends to pull out areas that have not been permanently set. Because of the lightness and delicacy of the inlay, tweezers are used to handle the metal. Fine scissors or snips are used to cut the sheet to match the shape desired. Near the outline inlay material is cut somewhat oversize. Once



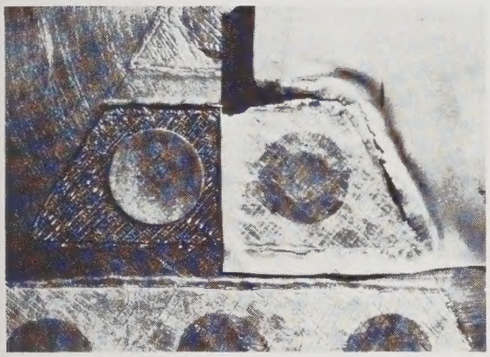
7. Textural cuts have been established in two directions



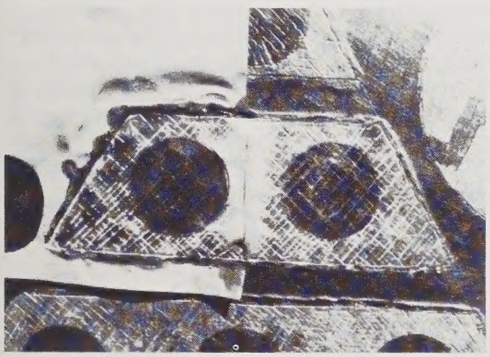
8. Textural cuts have been established in three directions; first set of diagonal cuts



9. The fourth and final set of cuts have been established; ready for inlay application



10. After having temporarily set the copper dots, the silver was applied using the setting tools; note how the chiseled outline cuts through the inlay material



11. After setting three sides of the silver, it is time to set the mating edges

12. The completed buckle front after planishing, chasing and oxidizing; prior to the piece being bezel set

positioned, the soft inlay metal is pressed into the hard burrs of the base using a chasing hammer with the setting tool. On thinner or more delicate metals, a brass setting tool is less likely to cut through the metal.

The inlay sequence is determined by the shape of the pattern. The inlay material will constantly stretch. If the inlay will completely fill the area with one piece of metal, or if it is the first of several contiguous pieces, hammering is started in the middle and worked toward the outside edge. The hammering sequence of subsequent pieces begins next to the edges of the previous inlay and proceeds outward. Setting a piece of inlay by hammering toward an area already set is not desirable. It may result in the new section stretching over existing inlay and not bonding to the base metal. The soft inlay material will be cut off by the outline burr, yielding a neat, finished border. If there are gaps where the individual sheets of inlay material fail to meet, cut a small piece to fit and set as previously explained.

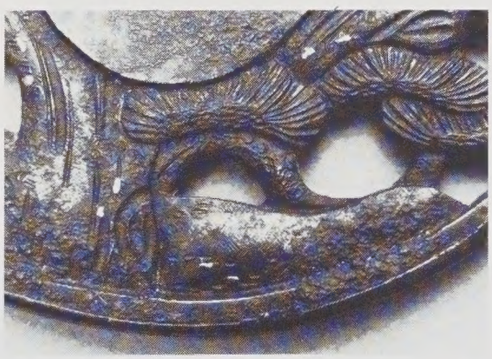
Finishing

The next step of the process is planishing the entire surface. This is done with a planishing tool (a flat, polished chasing tool). On larger pieces, a planishing hammer may be used. After this step, the entire piece can be annealed and then planished or burnished again to ensure the setting of the inlay. The piece may be annealed a second time if you plan to chase a pattern into the surface of the inlay. Other forms of surface treatment may be applied. The inlay can be enameled, sandblasted, scribed, partially abraded and/or oxidized. However, it cannot be etched, since the acid may eat away the thin skin of the inlay. Soldering is a problem, as this effectively creates a handle to pull the inlay away from the base.

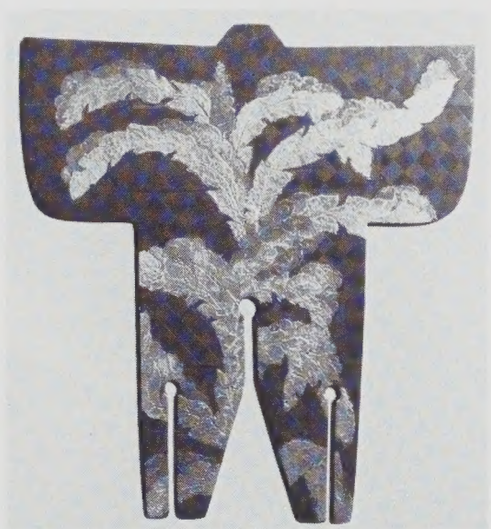
At this point, the annealings have oxidized the base metal. The oxide should be removed with the appropriate acids (naval jelly works well with steel). After stripping, the base metal is treated to create whatever surface embellishment is preferred. The piece is now ready for patination, which can include either heat or chemical treatment. Finally, the surface should be sealed with a hard wax.

Bruce Clark is an associate faculty member at Pima Community College in Tucson, Arizona.

13. *Japanese Tsuba*, carved iron and damascened/woven inlayed gold, 2½" by 2¾"



14. Detail of *Tsuba*; note the cross hatching and the worn gold inlay



Bruce Clark, *Noh Series Benchpin—Snowy Leaves*, steel, silver, gold, aluminum, chased and sandblasted, 9x7½x5"

Reviews

American Craft Today: Poetry of the Physical
American Craft Museum, NYC
October 26, 1986–March 22, 1987
by Michael Dunas

To speak of craft today is to open a Pandora's Box of conflicting ideologies. Entranced with art versus craft, craft versus design, craft versus decorative art, our critical eye rarely focuses on the institutions and organizations that define the craft community and codify its official image.

For the past 25 years, the public persona of craft has been synonymous with the American Craft Council and its armatures the American Craft Museum and American Craft Enterprises. In its uncontested position as spokesman for craft, the Council has been able to meander through history, complacently assuming the support of craftsman and collector alike without need to defend its leadership role.

With all the ballyhoo over the new museum space and the colorful panorama of its inaugural show, it might appear niggardly to scrutinize the Council's intentions. But for a museum to remain a trustworthy representative of its nominal constituency, it must remain relevant to the goals of that community in both its educational and curatorial efforts.

Much has been written about this year's craft extravaganza, and the attentive reader can pick his way through a journalistic muddle of praise, bewilderment and befuddlement in the writings of Neal Benezra and Grace Glueck in *The New York Times* or John Perrault in the *Village Voice*. I have chosen rather to read the accompanying catalog and official press releases, since they lend considerable insight into a philosophy and ideology that heralds the "poetry of the physical."

Paul Smith, director of the museum, opens his prefatory essay forthrightly by telling us that craft by its very nature represents a unity of hand and spirit that reaffirms the human element in daily life. In the modern world it is our master craftsmen who achieve beauty which speaks for the creative spirit undimmed by the machine or mass media. Smith's idea of craft in society seems not to have evolved beyond Morris and Ruskin's socialist reformation, the last hope of a dying humanism guarding against the cold clinical machine age, an intractable idea that has been languishing for more than a century now. But why poetry of the physical? Smith in an interview that accompanied the show's press release claims that "we wanted to honor the process of creating craft objects. I am talking about the intrinsic physical qualities of the various media and the process by which the artist works with them." With the spotlight on craft as humanistic materialism, can religious revivalism be far behind? A society born again of craft?

But it is the "today" in the title that anticipates the new, that has us eager to relive the memories of "Objects USA," the 1969 survey upon whose glories and critical praise the current exhibit hopes to capitalize. The 300 objects chosen for the "Poetry of the Physical" were made in the 1980s and thus must be viewed as representative of our times. Smith, in his essay, paints a background for these works that evinces the curatorial perspective of their selection: "The 1980s represent a period of refinement rather than of experimentation for its own sake. While tied to its rich historical roots of function, craft today is distinguished by the sophistication level of its aesthetic. The aesthetic which evolves from the process of making and the artist's spiritual involvement with the material enables the contemporary craftsman to transcend traditional forms and techniques, creating works of genuinely new significance . . . With technique resolved, the central concern is to make an object as beautifully and as well as possible but also to develop its expressive possibilities . . . Beauty is not always associated with contemporary art, yet it continues to be honored in the crafts." I feel compelled to quote Smith here to dispel any charges of incredulity in my claims that his "idea of craft" is at best sophomoric. His claims about refinement, function, process, spiritual involvement with material and the delusions of beauty are belied by the works in the show. Either Smith had found that the diverse nature of the work needed a binding context or there lurks an ulterior motive behind the superstructure of his illusionary perspective.

When Smith looks back, and he must look back to 1969 and "Objects USA" as the last major survey mounted by the ACM, he struggles to find recognizable features that have altered the look of the craft community over the last 15 years. He comes up with seven: flexibility and growth of educational programs, careerism, expanded market resources, plurality of purpose, diversity of American culture, rapid technical evolution and the influence of design in manufacture. As we listen to Smith, it becomes increasingly clear that the "idea of craft" is bound by the goals of the Council, that craft history must be used to validate the existence of the Council and that the ulterior motive is the aggrandizement of the Council's long history of market dominance.

Now, what's good for craft is good for the Council is a safe bet, but what's good for the Council might not be what's good for craft. Considering the early endeavors of Aileen Webb and America House to establish a market for well-made handcrafts and the subsequent education of rural practitioners in appropriate methods and practices, the current enterprise would appear consistent. The ACE has glorified and effectively capitalized on the craft fair, *American Craft* magazine has become a glossy promotional vehicle and the new museum's jam-packed showcase would make America House proud. The ACC has come a long way towards fulfilling the vision of Aileen Webb in making the handmade good a valued commodity. It is no surprise then that Paul Smith continues to propagate the notion that craft moves along the changing lines of the market, that careerism, technical innovation, the spiritual involvement in making, the beautiful object, all contribute to what Aileen Webb envisioned as the efficient, productive, innovative laborer whose products are eminently salable to an insatiable American consumer.

In support of Smith's and the Council's position, Edward Lucie-Smith contributes to the catalog a hackneyed narrative of craft history in the United States. In his essay, we are treated to the customary allegories of folk artists, the Arts and Crafts revival (the golden age) the Bauhaus and Wiener Werkstäate influences and then WWII, the seminal break that confounds the neat package of history. Lucie-Smith tries to cover as many bases as possible in his segment on current history, but, like many British commentators before him, he is uncomfortable with the pluralism and apparent freedom that art and craft enjoy in the post-war period. But before he ends, he is faithful to his appointed task in support of Smith's market history when in distinguishing art from craft he notes that the craftsman preoccupied with skill views himself as primarily a maker, a craftsman rather than an artist; that technical skills are objective knowledge passed on from one craftsman to another; that technique has evolved as the official language of crafts; and that crafts is a socialized community willing to share knowledge and experience.

The Smiths' position is untenable. Whether looking at the current period from a perspective of art history or craft history, the rise of the "new professional," a new class of skilled labor is an anachronism that has been obliterated from most critical discussion, even though remaining a stolid canon of the ACC.

The point of this argument is that we expect more from a museum than just self-serving commodity promotion. The concerns for scholarship, education and preservation cannot tolerate ideology that wears blinders to history and that seeks to influence commercial value directly. Suspicions must be raised as to the intentions of the ACC, the museum and "Poetry of the Physical" when ACE is a major source of income for the Council and a major force in the marketing of crafts. The separation of selling and scholarship is an issue that the ACC has failed to address. Only when this distinction is preserved can the museum maintain its standing of credibility within its community.

The catalog portfolio is divided into four thematic sections that correspond to the museum installation: the object as statement; the object made for use; the object as vessel; and the object for personal adornment. Paul Smith comments about the basis for these categories: "The categories do not separate works in any final definitive way. The categories were conceived primarily as a means of clarifying the complex variety of craft activity today and to aid the viewer in understanding its dynamic diversity." Clarify these categories, they do not. They are opaque and strategically ambiguous in terms of morphology, esthetic intention and stylistic analysis. Their mutual inclusivity affords the most tortuous semantics: the object as statement—I guess means art, an object that speaks with content; the object for use—obvious referral to utility, but does this necessarily exclude statement?; the vessel probably refers to the recently coined meaning by Wayne Higby that a vessel is a statement about a pot; then why doesn't it qualify it for the "statement" category?; the object for personal adornment is obviously things of beauty to beautify beautiful people. Further, the choice of objects in any category, when they are appropriate to a category, as many are not (for example, Fred Woell's commemorative spoon in "objects for

use") is mediocre, at best representative of the maker's reputation and dependent upon it. It is interesting to see how these categories are weighted by number of pieces exhibited: statement (110), use (45), vessel (90) and adornment (60). The two seemingly art categories "vessel" and "statement" overwhelm the crafty categories by almost 2 to 1, and, with Paul Smith expounding the virtues of the "new professionalism," "the sophisticated mature approach to craftmanship," it seems that these convoluted categories are meant to obstruct rather than instruct.

Notwithstanding the above criticism, the strategy of the ACC is successful. They have seduced a good number of major artists to showcase their work, validating the museum's enterprise and lending their reputation to the promotion of the Council's "idea of craft." The ACC, as Aileen Webb had hoped, rightfully claims the mantle of the spokesman for craft. In keeping with the custom of the Council, I respectfully acknowledge the patronage and support of their fellows who have contributed to this success: Kington, Bonner, Mueller, Griffin, Paley, Litsios, Woell, Simpson, Prip, Pearson, Baldwin, Theide, Flynn, Long, Shirk, Tisdale, Quigley, Hamlet, Underhill, Fisch, Hu, Eikerman, Miller, Saunders, Pijanowski, Friedlich, Ebendorf, Moty, Threadgill, Aguado, Holder, Thiewes, Lechtzin, Loloma, Loeber, Jerry, Ross, Opocensky, Leupp, Raber, Reed, Schick, MacNeil, Harper, Rapoport, Banyas, Scherr, Church, Metcalf, Laskin, Bennett, Colette, Rezac, Chase, Choo, Herbst, Klein, Schwarcz.

Note: Since this piece was written, notice has been extended by the ACC that Paul Smith will be retiring as director of the ACM as of September 1987. A nationwide search is now in progress to fill the position.

1986 International Jewelry Art Exhibition

Yurakucho Seibu Art Forum, Tokyo
August 30-September 16, 1986
by Janet Koplos

This is the sixth triennial exhibition of the Japan Jewelry Designers Association, and the second international. The panel of judges included an "overseas" representative—the peripatetic Paul Smith of the American Craft Museum, Jewelry by 81 foreign artists (only eight Americans) nd 46 Japanese was juried in. But then the international balance was seriously undermined by the invitation of an additional 131 Japanese jewelers. The invitees were not specified in the exhibition, although they are set apart in the bilingual catalog.

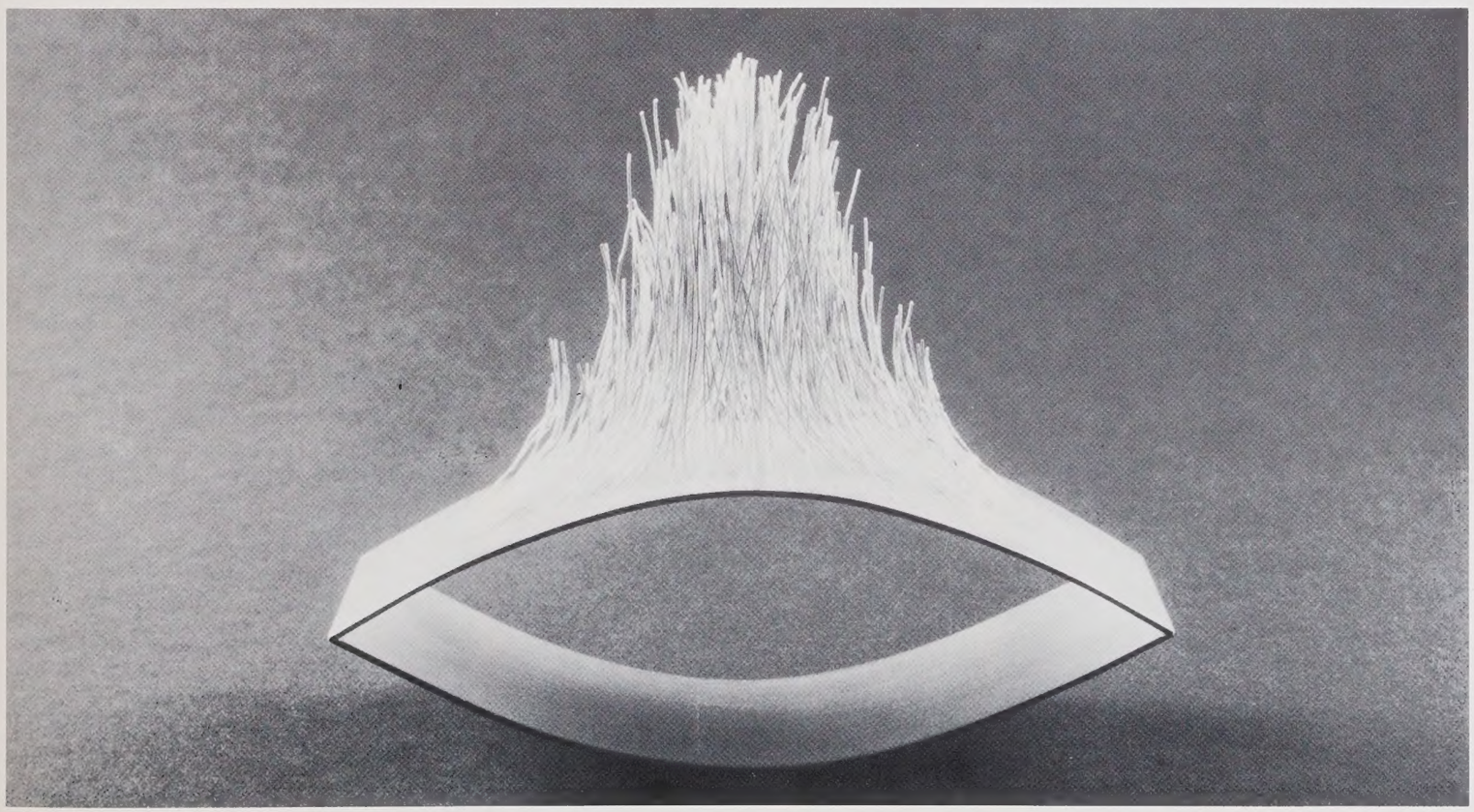
It's difficult to generalize about a show this large, but the Japanese representation seems to indicate that gold, platinum and precious stones are still held in high esteem (not really surprising when the average Japanese woman on the street wears 50s-style costume jewelry with lots of fake stones). Tokyo is a fashion city yet still rather formal and socially hierarchical. This may explain the emphasis on ostentatious luxury in many of the precious pieces, with the extreme being a gold, ruby and diamond parure so ornate it seems mannerist. A concomitant generalization one might draw from the show is that the now well-established Western trends toward nonfunctional jewelry and nonprecious materials are still quite limited in Japan.

The one possible exception is the use of Japanese paper in a half-dozen or so pieces. But then, although paper may not be precious in Japan it is certainly revered as an artistic material. And perhaps that's why it's believable that the jury would select as the grand prize winner a necklace by Verna Sieber-Fuchs of Switzerland made of torn glossy paper and wire. Considering its material, the peice is surprisingly formal and is reminiscent of a Peruvian or Mono Indian feather cape.

Other prize winners were Francesco Pavan (Italy) for a pair of brooches made of gold which looked like layers of corrugated cardboard; Tone Vigeland (Norway) for bracelets of silver which looked like thread; Orna Cahaner (Israel) for a hair ornament of copper, brass, iron on silver taking the form of an open-wire grid with pieces of scrap metal attached here and there; Donna Stoner (USA) for a pinched oval sterling silver bracelet with a delicate silver-thread fungi "growing" on top; Paul Derrez (Holland) for a necklace made of large smooth ovals of cork connected by thread; Hitoshi Sawada (Japan) for a silver bracelet that looks like a cross section of a pile of silver that had been compressed in a junkyard compactor; and Nobuo Arimoto (Japan) with the only prize-winning piece that includes a cut stone: a rhodium-plated silver brooch with acrylic, metallic-flaked Japanese paper and a cubic zirconia.

In contrast to the exhibition as a whole, the international winners certainly indicate a political nod to innovative works over precious jewelry. Perhaps this is a forced loosening of the Japanese jewelers esthetic?

A 144-page catalog of the show is available for 2000 yen and postage from Japan Jewellery Designers Association, 1-5-13 Horidome-cho, Nihombashi, Chuo-ku, Tokyo 103, Japan.



Donna Stoner, *Cactus Bracelet*, sterling silver, fine silver wire, 4½x1x5"

Report:
Guest Student in Germany

by Ann Grundler

Since visiting the Fachhochschule Fuer Gestaltung (College of Design) in Pforzheim in 1980, I have wished I could study there. In October 1986, I fulfilled that wish by entering the school as a guest student (Gasthoerer).

At this time it is not difficult to be admitted as a guest student for either Germans or foreigners. Some German language skills are helpful but there are no specific requirements. Most of the professors and the shop instructors speak some English. The 1986 fall semester started on October 16, and to be admitted as a guest student at least one month attendance is required. There is no charge for instruction, only for some materials. Most hand tools are provided by the student, but students and shop instructors were generous in letting me use some of their tools at times and the school owns a lot of equipment.

The three professors for jewelry/metalsmithing design are Klaus Ullrich, Jens Ruediger Lorenzen and Hermann Stark. They are available for instruction/consultation on Thursdays at a specific time. I studied with Professor Ullrich, concentrating on new ways to set the art glass I cut, as well as catches and findings. For jewelry rendering, the undisputed master is Professor Stark. He is at the school most of Thursday and Friday, constantly helping his students develop their designs on paper.

All the gold- and silversmithing is carried out in the studios, some of which are open one afternoon per week, like stonecutting with Mr. Stapff, to practically all day all week, like the goldsmithing studios under the guidance and technical instruction of Mr. Koenig. Enameling is taught by Mrs. Miller-Durfort, stonesetting by Mr. Ratz and silversmithing by Mr. Rombach (the studio is well equipped with hammers and stakes). The pace is not as pressing as one might expect in Germany. The motivated student will find the full acceptance and cooperation of professors, studio instructors and fellow students.

Despite the low value of the dollar at this time, it is relatively inexpensive to live in Pforzheim as a student. Most furnished rooms start at DM 150 a month. My room, within walking distance of the school and downtown, cost DM 230, including central heat and use of the bath and a hotplate. A hot lunch at the school cafeteria cost me DM 2,40—a bargain.

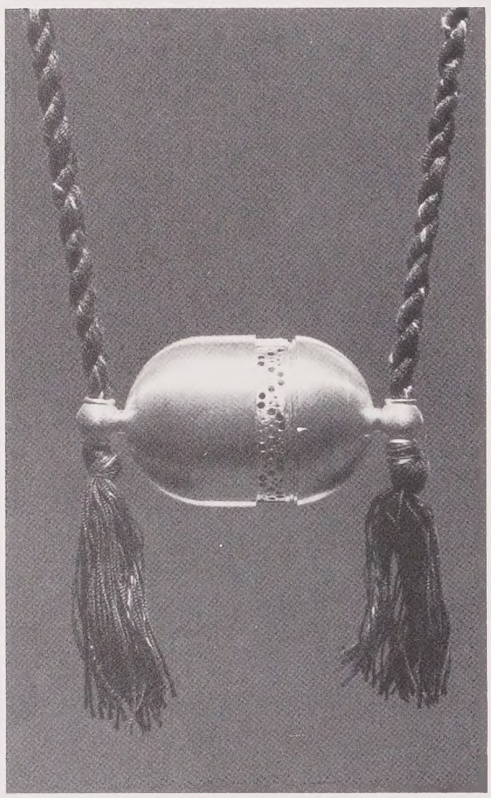
A stay in the goldsmithing city offers opportunities for cultural enrichment in and outside the field of jewelry and for contact with other goldsmiths. On my first Sunday in town, Reuchling Haus, best known for the jewelry museum, had its 25-year celebration. Dr. Fritz Falk, director of the museum, presented and personally interpreted a jewelry and fashion show. Models wore the dress and jewelry of the Renaissance, Baroque and Rococo periods, all original pieces from the museum collection. Others were dressed in the Empire style, in the 60s' style, with the jewelry of Reinhold Reiling, and in today's style to demonstrate the styles of jewelry fashionable over the centuries.

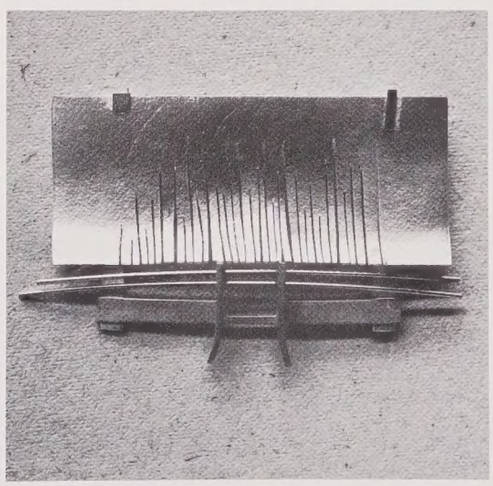
I had the opportunity to meet goldsmiths demonstrating during the celebration, particularly Johann Mueller, Willi Haefele and Norbert Mack. Mack is also a watch designer and was demonstrating how he uses watercolors in the rendering of his watch designs. I took advantage of invitations to see their studios and their work. I also visited Wolfgang Zipp, whose jewelry I have admired for a long time. He now teaches design and rendering at the Goldschmiedeschule (Goldsmith School) in Pforzheim.

One afternoon I spent at the Technical Museum in Pforzheim, a showcase of jewelry and watch industry. It collects both outdated machinery, old tools and complete shops of yesterday as well as some of the most contmporary. Several craftsmen demonstrated their trade, soldering, cutting stone, polishing and engraving.

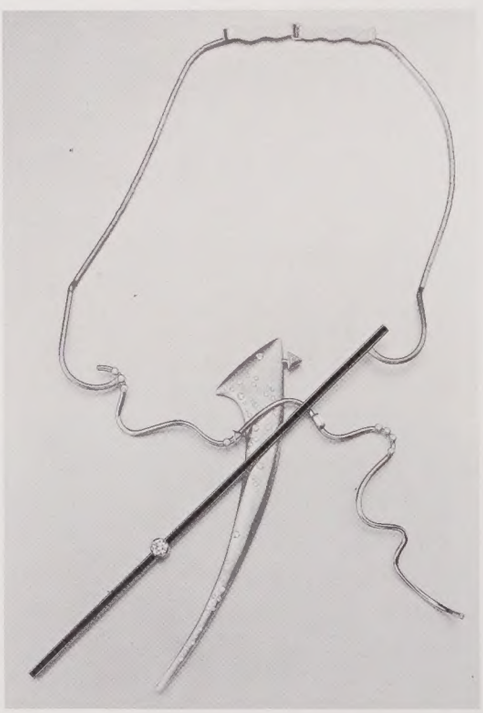
The month in Pforzheim was an enriching experience. I was able to experiment with new design approaches, such as sawcuts, fluted sections and stainless steel wire. I learned to weld 24k onto sterling, make various catches and drill glass. I accomplished what I had set out to do.

If you wish to study gold- and silversmithing (Schmuck und Gerate Design in Germany), write to the Fachhochschule fuer Gestaltung Pforzheim, Holzgartenstrasse 36, D-7530 Pforzheim, West Germany. Address the letter to Herrn Mueller, Pruefungs and Praktikantenamt (Room 204). The fall semester lasts from October to February and the spring semester from March to July. After being admitted to the school, you register on the day instruction begins. You must present a resume, proof of previous study/work in the field of jewelry, one passport photo and proof of health insurance (or the means to pay). For foreign students wishing to stay over three months, a visa/permit from the German Consulat or from the office for foreigners (Auslaenderbehoerde) is required.





Left: Susi Rosenberg, *Necklace* (partially open); **above:** Willi Häfele, *Earrings*, platinum, diamonds; **below left:** Ann Grundler, *Brooch*, sterling silver, steel wire, 14k gold bits. Photos: Ann Grundler; **below:** Johann Miller, *Necklace* in platinum, 18k gold, diamonds



Ann Grundler is an independent jeweler living and working in Castro Valley, CA.

Chung/Margry/Perito

Plum Gallery, Kensington, MD
January 11-February 3, 1987
by Desirée Midgett

The exhibit of three Washington-area metalsmiths—Haesun Chung, Eric Margry and Pat Perito—at the Plum Gallery gave viewers an opportunity to study three different styles and approaches to modern jewelry.

As if by magic, Chung's *Kite* series soars with greens, blues, purples, yellows, bronze tinges, unforeseen forms and unexpected iridescences. Her skillful use of colors and techniques results in captivating pins, pendants and earrings. From her simple geometric shapes and delicate curves, subtle power radiates in harmonious proportions. This new series shows that Chung's creativity is in continuous evolution.

Margry's use of grid patterns with a spot of color has a pleasing effect that is enhanced by clean workmanship. He successfully executes a design for a three-dimensional room object (a clock) and translates it into a design for earrings and brooch. His vocabulary of flatness and simplicity is clearly articulated in geometric forms that show his admiration for the De Stijl movement.

Perito's jewelry designs derive, for the most part, from shapes and textures seen in nature and in man's manipulation of nature's bounty. Her *Nacho* series is reminiscent of the sandscapes that one encounters in the arid West. The forms she chooses for her pieces are full of optimism and pleasurable excitement, but stable and controlled; they are sure to capture the interest of strong personalities. Her work has character and vitality.

Below: Pat Perito, *Nacho* earrings and three cuffs, sterling silver. Photo: Kenneth Wyner; **right:** Haesun Chung, *Opulent Light* pin, brass, sterling silver, titanium, 2x3x½". Photo: Judy Sugar; **below right:** Eric Margry, *Silverwear* pins, sterling silver, 2½x¾". Photo: Tom DiMaria, Andrew Ellis

James Barker

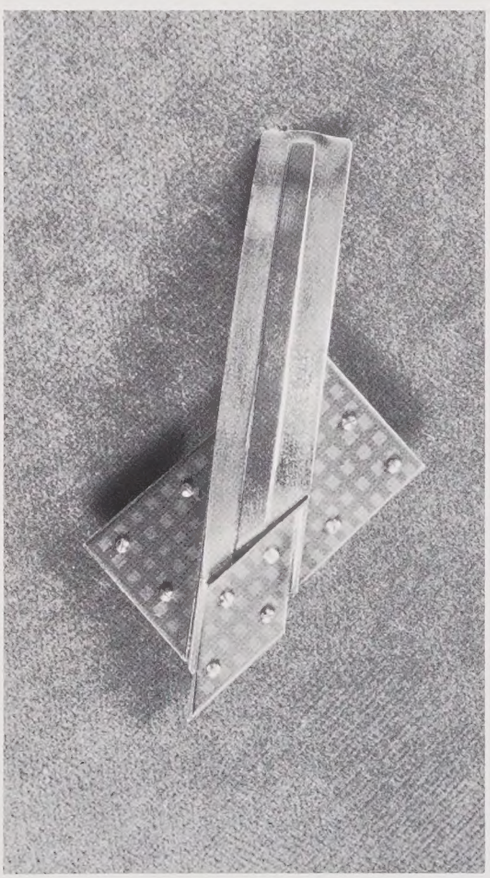
Jewelry Room, Gallery Fair, Mendocino, CA
August 30-September 28, 1986
by Ann Grundler

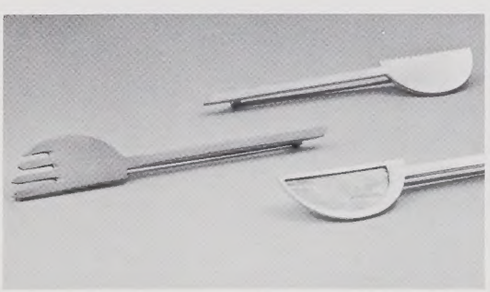
With infinite patience, Barker fabricates necklaces, pendants, brooches, rings and earrings, both singly and in pairs. His work is inspired by primitive and ancient folk jewelry. The fine lines or scratches on the back as well as on the front of the jewelry are evidence of his understanding of the primitive. The whole field of archeology influences his designs. The circular floor plan of a pit house was the starting point for several pendants, and the street plan of Cruzca, Peru was the basis for some of his long earrings. He loves older Navajo jewelry and rarely looks at contemporary work. Yet his necklaces are fashionable; they wrap softly around the neck; they are fluid, with all their links giving flexibility to the units. In 1983, Barker received the Grand Prize Award at Intergold's Jewelry Design Competition for a necklace with diamonds, pearls and a moonstone. The small pieces of 18k sheet and formed wire are textured on several sides and soldered to form interesting compositions. These units are joined to comprise the necklaces in a balanced asymmetry.

A pair of earrings is a good example of his application of hundreds of tiny granules and triangles, stripes and squares of gold sheet. Not only the front, but also, the back is subtly enriched with these tiny bits of gold and chasing and engraving. Barker loves the byzantine and the opulent that sparkle and glitter. His work is visible from afar but invites close inspection. The back has two or three tiny plaques: one carries his initials, one the Aztec glyph for gold and one the karat stamps.

To bring color into his miniature world, Barker uses opal, diamond, zircon, turquoise, emerald and ruby. One of his favorites, and very effective with the rich color of the 18k gold, is gem chrysocolla. To Barker the whole piece is the jewel and not just a mounting for gems. He is not afraid to use a piece of bottle glass from the Nevada desert or a rod of synthetic ruby actually made for use in a laser. In a pair of earrings he set haliotis (abalone shell) with gold granules floating on top and held in place by rivets.

To James Barker, his jewelry represents talismans and fetishes. He creates in his own small world without TV or newspaper, just listening to the radio. He is a multifaceted artist. Several of his pastels were in the same show.





James Barker, *Single Ear Ornament*, 18k gold, coral, dioptase, diamonds, American freshwater pearl

Contemporary American Metals

Adair Margo Gallery, El Paso, TX
October 29–November 21, 1986
by Beverly Penn

"Contemporary American Metals" was cocurated by gallery owner Adair Margo and artist Rachelle Thiewes. The result of Thiewes's sensitive curatorial imput was a meaningful variety of jewelry, holloware and sculpture that dealt with many significant concerns in the field of metalsmithing. Issues of both form and content were subjects of inquiry by the eight artists represented. While the majority of the work in the show articulated these concerns eloquently, there seemed, in some pieces, to be a disparity between scale and content. By scale, I mean the size and weight relationships between forms.

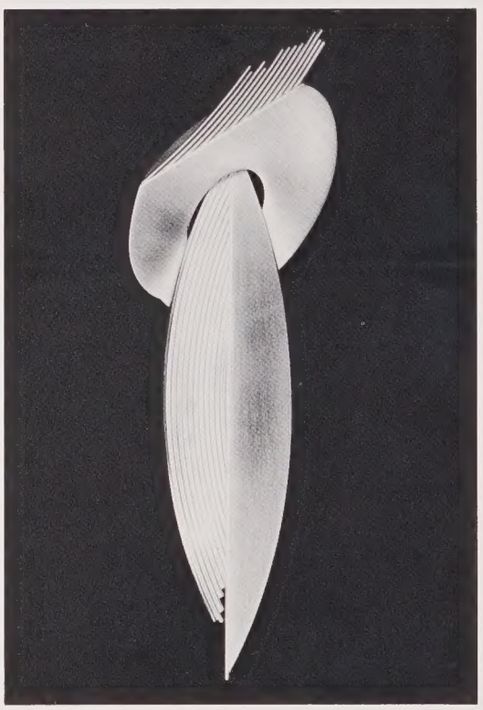
Scale as a general consideration for jewelry is necessarily associated with the issue of wearability. The particular format that an artist chooses is critical to content. Most of the jewelry pieces in this exhibition are brooches. Worn on the upper torso, brooches and broochlike objects have various historical contexts and functions, each of which suggests specific materials and dimensions. A breastplate exploits far different content, materials and scale than does a corsage, though both relate to the concept of brooch.

Artists in this exhibition most sensitive to the issue of content in form are Kate Wagle and William Harper. Wagle creates metaphorical "corsages" of sterling that are patinated with the thick white luster of fine silver. The opacity and density of these surfaces seem to mimic succulent plant forms that reinforce the floral references. The scale of her brooches is perfectly resolved, and the complex and varied iconography that associates flowers with ceremony, celebration, sexuality and vanity is eloquently stated.

Harper's emblematic brooches explore medieval fascinations with heraldic symbolism and talismanic function. A "horror vacui" sensibility weaves together the charmingly disparate cells of enamel, plastic and stones with precious metal cloisons into a cohesive whole that glows enigmatically like an intricately detailed illuminated manuscript. Their badgelike scale suggests the power of preciousness and is absolutely correct.

Relationships of form and content are also resolved in the jewelry of Susan Hamlet and Leslie Leupp. Both artists wield high-tech industrial materials into structured yet whimsical compositions. Leupp refers to the frenetic pace of contemporary American culture by combining highly incongruous materials and colors. His work seems a microcosmic comment on Post Modern architecture yet, at other times, has a provocative toylike character. It plays with our sensibility of intimacy and remoteness, dependence and independence.

Functional scale as a restriction on purely sculptural or painterly expression is a critical issue in the work of Rachelle Thiewes and Jamie Bennett. Thiewes's art is at once sophisticated and primordial, luxurious and defiant. The whole is a sensitive organization of toothy or beadlike parts that are profoundly



Above: Kate Wagle, *The Whitest Corsage* brooch, sterling silver, 6x2x½"; **below:** Helen Shirk, *Partners Vessel CV27S*, copper, patina, 22x9x8", 1986

black or white. Often she introduces accents of gold, slate or coarsely variegated forms that imitate furlike membranes stretched tautly over threateningly pointed armatures. Her bracelet functions clearly as both wearable art and as sculpture that explores primitive traditions of stringing magic charms or beads. Her large-scale brooches are defiant flirtations with the limitations of wearability and function. These pieces, however, have superseded their own parameters as wearable art. They seem, rather, to be provocative investigations of handheld function, perhaps weapons, ceremonial rattles or tools, that could activate a larger, purely sculptural scale.

Brooches are traditionally two-dimensional in emphasis and therefore logical formats for the painterly concerns of artist Jamie Bennett. Substantially framed with thick gold boundaries, the color in Bennett's work functions more as noun than as adjective. Gestural and expressive, the enameled marks bear resemblance to Abstract Expressionism, which critic Harold Rosenberg viewed as a record of activity—not as a picture but as an event. With a strong formal similarity, Bennett's gestures tempt one to wonder what activity they record or herald. Salubrious in character, his boldness seems restricted, almost enervated, by a four-inch scale. As sublime as these pieces are, it is not clear whether they are about jewelry or painting, intimacy or grandeur.

Though Susan Hamlet and Helen Shirk identify two very different sensibilities in American holloware, both explore the idea of the vessel metaphorically, as a vehicle for expression rather than as a utilitarian object. In their conceptual inquiries, scale and its accompanying implications are strategic areas of concern. Hamlet's austere and powerful vessels make strong reference to Classical aspects of Post Modern architecture. They are pristine and authoritative in intention, but the reach towards monumentality is thwarted by a timidity in scale. Shirk's holloware forms of cut, jagged planes activate rather than displace the space they occupy. An allusion to desert flora is achieved through the alliance of seductive color with aggressive forms that are of a size familiar to the arid landscape. The metaphor of the desert succulent as vessel or container (the cactus is literally a preserver of water in the arid environment) is insightful and inspired.

The sole representative of the sculptural format in the exhibition is Bruce Metcalf. While sculpture is not restricted by preconceptions of scale due to requirements of function, Metcalf's work seems bound to, not enhanced by a jewelry sensibility. He purports to offer "tentative solutions to the puzzles of life" (artist's quote) but the maquettelike scale and illustrative quality of his work distance us from the content. Though technically remarkable, the diminutive scale can reduce the integrity of his narratives to cuteness.

Smaller scale is a choice, not a requirement, of using metal as a medium. There are important psychological implications of working greater or lesser than human scale that inform both the content and form of three-dimensional expression. As artists creating in real rather than implied space, it is essential that metalsmiths acknowledge these effects.

American Figurative Jewelry: Catherine Butler, Enid Kaplan, Stewart Wilson, Bruce Metcalf

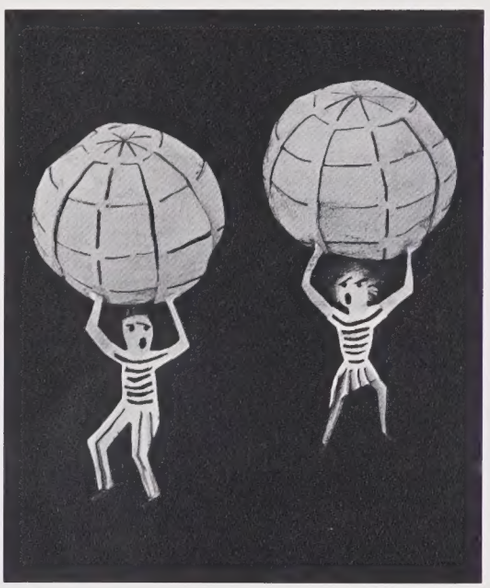
VO Galerie, Washington, D.C.
by Komelia H. Okim

The dominant elements of this exhibit were the different approaches and variety of techniques using the human figure. As gallery owner Joke van Ommen stated in her introduction to the show, "Above all this group of artists uses the medium as a means to communicate—ranging from very personal feelings to political statements."

Twilight Zoned, No Way, Jose, The Connection, Why do you Ask?, Always Something, Hold the Line, Inner Spirits, Energy and etc . . , are Enid Kaplan's titles that show strong emotional responses about everyday mundane rituals. Her comments on different social, spiritual and psychological responses transform her jewelry. Kaplan's special interest in Brazilian, Peruvian, Assyrian and Egyptian religion and mythology are evoked by her unusual color combinations of browns, blacks, reds, purples lavenders and greens painted onthe copper and brass or produced by anodizing niobium and titanium. Her figures are dangling or glancing through geometrical framework, as if conveying a certain message to the viewer. They are theatrical, stylized sketchings of male and female relationships, long phone conversations and other types of human interaction. These topics are definitely contemporary, intended to draw the viewer to the issues as well as to provide a catharsis for the artist.

"I like to use the body as a stage for an idea—such as earrings that have some kind of interaction going on through the wearer's head, or a set of pins which relate to each other and can be arranged by the wearer," states Catherine Butler. This philosophical bent is clearly seen in her pin series *Catch* and her earring series *Sleepwalk.* Her pieces are executed in a minimal fashion—resembling flat paper cut-outs. Though not dimensional in construction, the gestural movements of the bodies, the facial expressions, the hint of colors on the metal and mobile elements together create an illusion of vitality and humor. Her figures reflect a personal conviction that humor is a vital part of her approach to the work. She wants to give the wearer the joy of laughter. Catherine Butler's pieces are not static or prearranged by the artist—they permit the wearer to arrange them according to the mood of the moment—to catch or to be caught.

Over the years Stewart Wilson has created over 7,000 fetishes of warriors and chargers, which he calls "personas," obsessions of his mind and soul. He creates his personas by wrapping a framework in cloth and decorative accents of feathers, leather, straw, fur, colored paper, wire and threads. Each figure is unique in its movement and expression. The warriors measure one to two inches and the chargers two to three inches in height. Superficially, the figures resemble voodoo dolls; but, because of their playful postures and bright costuming, they become talismans. They invite you to laugh and smile with them and to enjoy the luck they will surely bring. The banding copper wires with the ends left free at the waist become a support when the warriors are stood upright. These tiny body personas are part of a street carnival in which they are both the entertainers and the entertained. For the buyer, they become a precious object that is ornamental and mystical in nature.



Top left: Enid Kaplan, *Jenny Made Up Her Mind,* 14k gold, sterling silver, niobium, brass, paint, mylar, 2¾x3½x¼"; **top right:** Stewart Wilson, *Persona,* mixed media. Photo: David Behl; **above left:** Bruce Metcalf, *Wood Pin #3,* gold leaf on wood, 5x2"; **above right:** Catherine Butler, *What Do We Do Now?* earrings, silver, copper, brass, patinated brass, 2½x1¼x½". Photo: Jordan Davis

As Stewart Wilson states, "The personas are wrapped representatives from another dimension, definitely here for peaceful purposes. I am honored to consider them my friends. May they be for you a personal guardian and charm. Inside this personal home (a plastic box) you will find a color xerox "portrait" which is handsigned and numbered. The magnifying square is included to enable closer inspection. . . ."

What a change Bruce Metcalf has made in his recent work. His earlier work *Lady in a Basket, Catching the Bomb I and II, Bird in Flight* contrast with his most recent work, a series of wood pins, *Series One through Eight,* of female figures. These figures are voluptuously floating, waltzing, running, walking and sailing through the air of carefully carved oak and maple, some accentuated with ebony hairdos and legs, others done in simplified copper and brass. While his earlier drawings on mylar, constructed three-dimensionally, offered female and male expressions of fright or apprehension, the recent female facial expressions and body structures are silhouettes of organically soft curves and are gilded with 22k gold leaf. Beneath the gilt bright green, red and black colors appear in a crackle effect. These colors activate the figures with emotion. His later imagery contrasts sharply with earlier work that is angular, textural and disconsonant. The figures now are less obsessed with feelings and are more freely floating in space, benign in their orientation, and at peace.

Individually and collectively, the work of the four artists in this exhibition provokes some thoughtful soul-searching in the viewer. Though outwardly decorative, they are strong personal statements of the artists' social convictions.

Contemporary Metals USA

Downey Museum of Art, Downey, CA
December 4, 1986–January 16, 1987
by Carolyn Novin

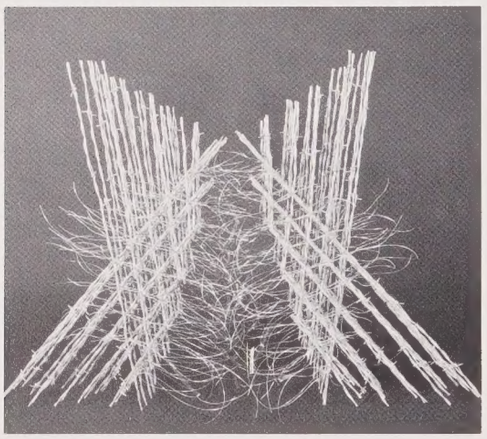
"Contemporary Metals USA" presented jewelry, holloware/vessels, sculpture and relief; it was comprehensive in its inclusion of materials and processes, eclectic in its 168 examples of the personal expression of the 145 contributors, including work by juror Arline M. Fisch and invited artists Leslie Leupp, Linda Threadgill, Michael Tom, Stephen Bondi and Christina Smith.

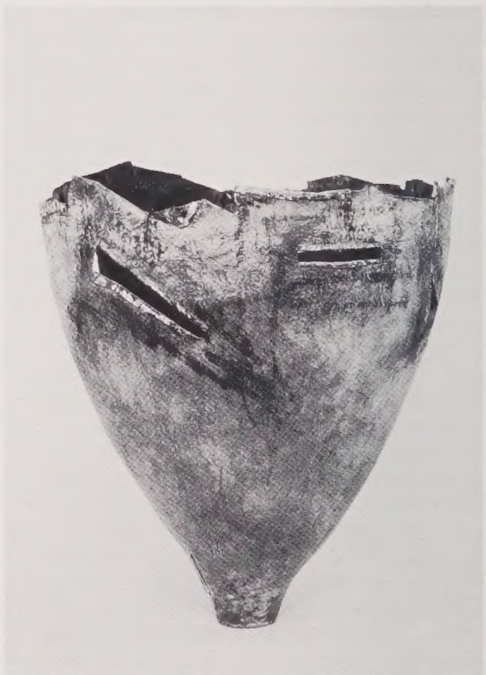
Some artists demonstrated interest in architectonic forms and images. Michael Jerry's pewter coffee pot was a construct of linear and cylindrical units; Cynthia Cetlin's brooch was an orthogonal facade of rectangles and tubes of sterling, aluminum, brass, tantalum and niobium with tourmaline crystal. Other artists, such as Jan Craft, preferred naturalistic sources; her *Landscape #6* circular brooch counterbalanced curvilinear patterned damascus steel elements with gestural gold wires. Susan Kingsley's wall sculpture *Hidden Fruition,* with copper leaves shielding a fecund pod of carved and colored acrylic, was representational. *Skate* by Ronald Wyancko suggested, in sterling silver, the graceful sea-creature. Pamela Lins, Munya Avigail Upin and J.Fred Woell—to name just three of many—composed with found objects, miniaturizations and written commentary to create objects rich in narrative connotation.

Metal was often used as strips, threads or spikes to be woven, wrapped or aggressively projected. Nora Vest's *Silver Figure Series,* a nine-foot tall, crocheted copper sculpture, soared like an abstracted gossamer Nike. *Threshold-Passage #2* sculpture by Ellen Phillips, of steel wire with bits of impaled and indecipherable film transparencies, made poignant reference to the pain of growth. Molly Hart's *Window Cells* relief, woven of narrow copper strips, was a symmetrical matrix from which iridescent mylar "crystals" glowed and invited closer inspection.

Humor relieved the expressions of pain, anxiety and uncertainty. For example, Sarah Perkins' *Sandwich Toothpicks 11* of fine silver with red, blue and white cloisonné enamel, took a light-hearted jab at the form-function-theme game. Also noteworthy was Marjorie Simon's picaresque *Rectangular Dancing Boxes,* a colorfully painted brass trio on inverted cone legs with whimsical appliqués and irregularly edged open tops.

Numerous objects referred to spiritual and primitive themes. Shari Mendelson's *Quiet Blues* vessel, its volume pierced by golden-edged slits, its impact heightened by interplay of dark inner and subtly blued outer copper surfaces, was redolent of ancient ceremony. In contrast, Leslie Hawk evoked tension by the contradiciton of apparent formal delicacy and the weight of implied ritualistic significance in her sculpture, *Elevated Vessel,* of blown glass and forged steel, painted a



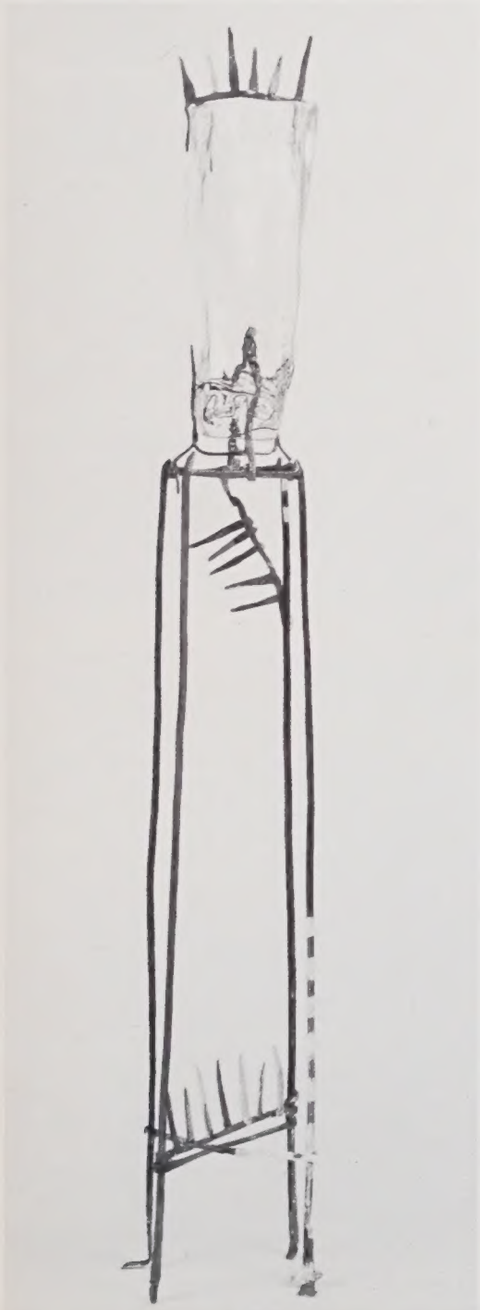


Above left: Ellen Phillips, *Threshold-Passage 2*, steel wire, transparencies, 23x32x14″; **above center:** Randall Gunther, *Dream Spiral*, titanium, 2x2x¾″; **above:** Shari Mendelson, *Quiet Blues*, copper, gold foil, paint, oil pastels, patina, 20x17″; **left:** Pamela Lins, *Untitled*, copper, bronze, patinas, found object, 19″ d.; **opposite page, right:** Leslie Hawk, *Elevated Vessel*, forged painted steel, blown glass, 39x5x5″

vibrant blue, purple and pink. By juxtaposing a contemporary material with a haunting cephalic form and mysterious pattern of piercing, Randall Gunther' stitanium brooch, *Dream Spiral,* stimulated awareness of time and history.

In general, the work in "Contemporary Metals USA" reflected preference for detail and interrelation of small elements over monumentality to build effect. Although emphasis on meaningful content brought some pieces to the brink of overresolution, it was refreshing to see a metal show where metal, as the most frequently used material, displayed its versatility in objects that provoked thought, celebrated beauty and raised a smile.

A 10-page illustrated catalogue is available for $5 from the Downey Museum of Art, 10419 Rives Avenue Downey, CA 90241.



Komelia Hongja Okim

Plum Gallery, Kensington, MD
October 19–November 11, 1986
by Dalene Barry

Komelia Hongja Okim recently came to know another part of the United States and her work is richer from the experience. Okim spent a year teaching at the University of Wisconsin, observing the city of Madison and the surrounding countryside. In her jewelry, shown at Plum Gallery, Okim interprets this environment in metalworking techniques adopted from her native Korea.

Poe-mock Saang-gaam is a Korean Damascene technique borrowed from the fiber tradition of cloth inlay. Thin foil or threadlike wires of pure gold, silver and copper are inlaid on textured mild steel without soldering. Okim chisels the steel surface in four directional lines, positioned as closely together as threads in woven cloth. Wires or foil, as thin as 32–36 gauge, are then hammered into the textured surface. In most pieces the steel was heat-colored black before the inlay work began.

Using the steel base as a sketch pad, Okim employs Poe-mock Saang-gaam to create graphic images and gestural lines. Shades of silver, gold and copper, patterned to offset one another, create a three-dimensional composition on the flat two-dimensional form.

Winter in Madison No. 7, a square pin/pendant, was the finest example of this cloth inlay technique. Delicate whisps of silver and gold played against a backdrop of gold and copper shapes, giving the flat surface vitality and depth. Geometric shapes in sterling silver, juxtaposed around the bezeled frame, embellished the dimensional effect of the work.

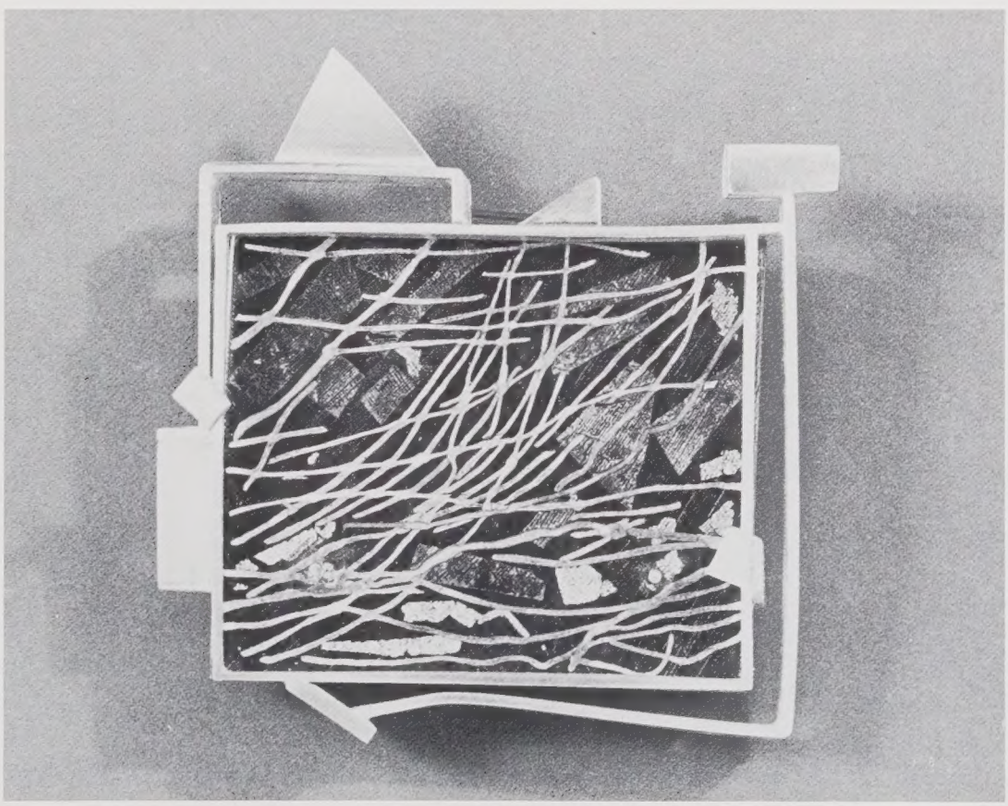
Winter in Madison No. 9, another example of Poe-mock Saang-gaam in a pin, featured a fanciful beaklike shape perched atop the inlaid design of gold and silver. In the pin *Fall Sunset,* Okim has left the top half of the steel base its natural silver color, offering a vivid contrast to the blackened lower portion. A droplet of silver resembling a pearllike moon is set into the top section, confirming this piece as an easily readable landscape.

Keum-boo, a Korean technique of gold overlay seen previously in Okim's work, was refined in some cases to a serenely controlled method of highlighting rather than simple, decorative surface embellishment. Pure gold foil is applied to either a smooth or textured sterling silver surface. This technique is also accomplished without soldering. The artist uses a torch or hot plate to attain the right temperature and presses the foil onto the silver with a burnisher.

Zebra City, a pin/pendant, combines Keum-boo with zebra wood. The wood forms a richly colored earthy foundation for the intricate design in sterling silver, suggesting a futuristic cityscape. Slivers of gold highlight areas of the silver, focusing the viewer's eye within this architectural landscape, which could easily be imagined on a much larger, grander scale. It is the earth in miniature—seen from the ground up, celebrating flash and line and the brilliance of the city.

Okim's new collection, particularly the Poe-mock Saang-gaam pieces, reflects a command of metalworking technique and concept that pays tribute to her bicultural world. She celebrates the best of each heritage in a composite approach that is uniquely her own. Each new series of works shows a more subtle mastery of design.

Komelia H. Okim, *Winter in Madison No. 7* pin-pendant, mild steel, silver, 24k gold, copper



New Jersey Arts Annual: Fiber, Metal and Wood

New Jersey State Museum, Trenton, NJ
November 1, 1986–January 11, 1987
by Katharine S. Wood

The "Annual," which is cosponsored by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts and four host museums, has been divided into four categories, each presented every two years. The most recent Arts Annual, which showed at the New Jersey State Museum in Trenton, was entitled "Fiber, Metal and Wood." The distinguished jury consisted of Glenda Arentzen (metal), David Ellsworth (wood) and Lewis Knauss (fiber).

Under such circumstances, one would have expected a knock-out show. It was not. Several of the entries, some from well-known New Jersey artists, were of high caliber, while other caused this viewer to wonder how they could have been juried in.

This paradox was especially true of the metals section. Why was there so much banal work alongside pieces that were truly museum quality? The technical expertise on the whole was on a high level. But where was the vision?

Not having been privy to the deliberations of the jury, I can't know whether the jurors were too narow in their selections or whether they simply did not have enough quality material to choose from. One might suspect the latter, as apparently there were only 371 entries from 148 artists. This was narrowed down to 81 entries from 54 artists (in the metals division, only 24 entries from 13 artists were shown). A number of artists might have been deterred by the single juror system. With only one person specializing in each category, those who felt their style did not fit that juror's viewpoint may not have bothered to enter. This possibility was actually noted by juror David Ellsworth when he wrote in the catalog: "I wondered . . . if I, as a vessel maker, might not have discouraged many of New Jersey's fine furniture makers from applying. Clearly, there is exceptional woodwork being produced which was just not seen."

The exhibit emphasized abstract and nonrepresentational styles. In many of the more interesting pieces, there was the appearance of understatement and simplicity together with a mastery of difficult techniques. It was good to see a certain purity of design instead of the proliferation of technical gimmicks that so often substitute for artistic content in craftwork.

Among pieces that deserve special mention was Aniello Schettino's tactile and elegant *Rosary,* in fused and forged silver. An interesting juxtaposition of elongated rods and small round discs created a flowing unity, punctuated at one end with a small flat cross.

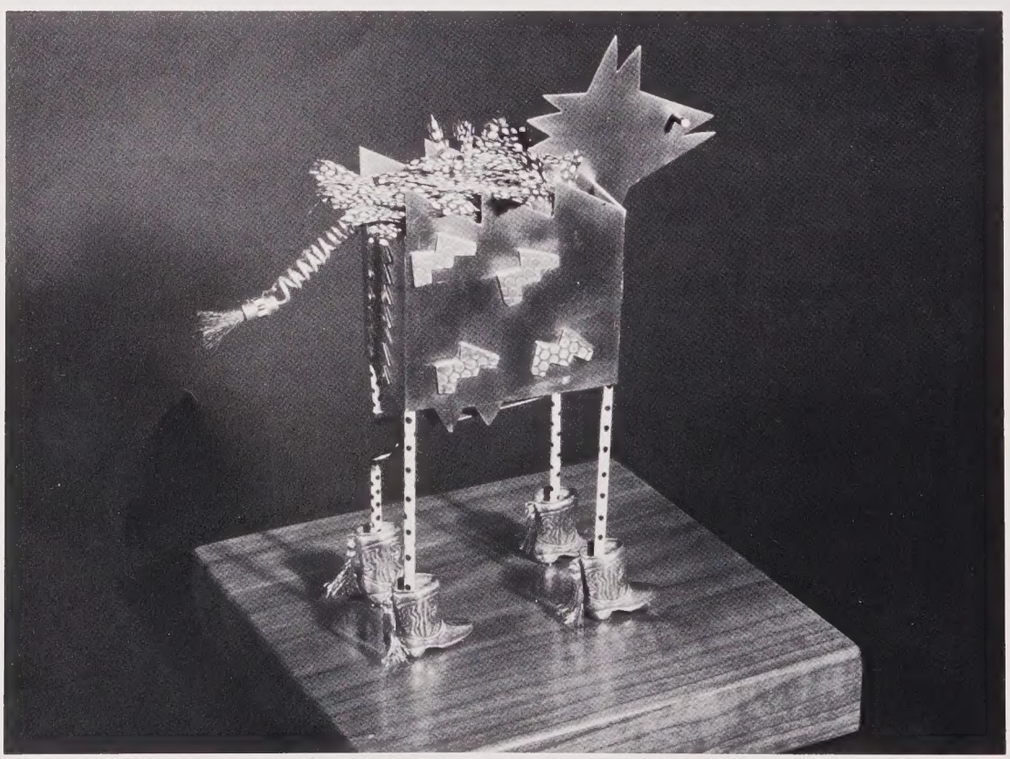
Charles Kumnick displayed two of his futuristic-ritualistic constructions, elaborate inventions using a variety of contrasting forms and emphasizing a combination of metal with acrylic.

Margorie Simon's humorous entry *Dog Daze* was an inventive mix of several metals, feathers, paint and wood that effectively combined a sharp angularity and aggressiveness with an endearing playfulness and self-mockery.

Peg Miller's enamel entry, a plate entitled *Earth,* used a brilliant transparent enamel on copper, fused alongside sections of bare oxidized (firescale) metal and opaque white, an image of simple strength and beauty.

And finally, of note were Susan Kriegman's attractive mokume brooches. The shapes were elegant and the cut-out areas, echoing the patterns of the mokume, gave the pieces an unusual sculptural quality.

Marjorie Simon, *Dog Daze*, brass, copper, nickel, feathers, silver, wood, 4x3x7", 1985–86



Metalsmiths of the Midwest

The Pennsylvania State University
University Park, PA
January 12–February 1, 1987
by Albert A. Anderson, Jr.

The works of 22 Midwest jewelers and metalsmiths were assembled for this exhibition at Pennsylvania State University. Chuck Evans, professor of jewelry and metalsmithing at the Iowa State University and author of *Jewelry: Contemporary Design and Technique,* was guest curator. The show spanned a wide range of contemporary metals production from decorative jewelry to expressive sculptural objects.

A number of artists presented purely sculptural work, which contrasted delightfully to the more decoratively and functionally oriented objects. Among these were several untitled polychrome pieces by John Ready and a number of *Totems* by Rachna Wallach in pewter, paint and wood. To some extent, Komelia Okim's pieces in sterling and other materials also had strong sculptural intent even though each possessed some functional containment aspect as well. The most impressive of these was Seoul Bridge in sterling, bronze and anodized titanium.

Among the participants contributing jewelry to the show, Lisa D'Agostino and Sam Farmer both provided strong and complex pieces employing married-metals techniques. Farmer had a number of examples reflecting great technical precision and control, with some exhibiting expressive content as well. D'Agostino's works, while also clearly reflecting a mastery of the materials and processes, appeared to be more spontaneous in quality as well as fun to look at.

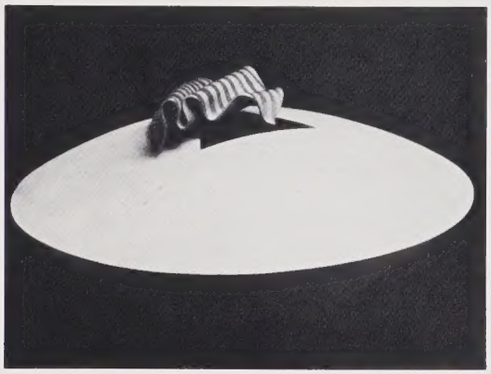
Among the other excellent artists represented were Jon Havener, Lynn Hull, Mark Knuth, Joe Muench, Thomas Muir, Susan Noland, Jean Sampel, Olli Valanne and Ann Wright. Each of the exhibitors made a strong contribution to this wonderful exhibition and left no doubt that the quality of metalsmithing and jewelry production in the Midwest is high indeed.

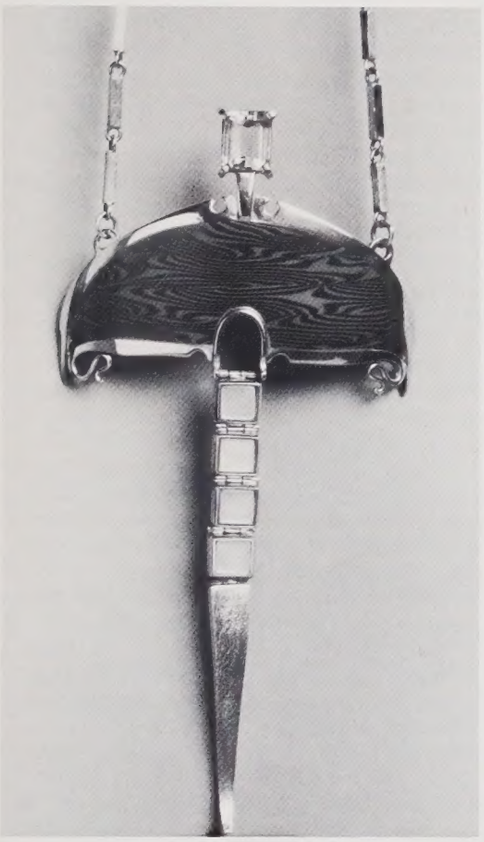
Several of the exhibitors are prominent metal artists who have shaped the field of jewelry and metalsmithing. In addition to Evans, artists Fred Fenster, Eleanor Moty and Heikki Seppä offered exemplary work that provided a context within which the work of many of the younger or lesser known exhibitors could be viewed and appreciated.

Of the group, only Evans's objects, a series of anodized-aluminum wall pieces, represented a major departure from earlier work. Exquisite in color and form, these pieces exhibited a wonderful sense of spirit and fun. On the other hand, Fred Fenster's elegant functional works in pewter, that included a sugar bowl, creamer, vase and wine cup, represented the continuation of a long personal tradition of graceful, raised forms and beautiful surfaces.

Eleanor Moty's spare, angular brooches in silver and gold with rutilated quartz, like Fenster's work, reflected continued exploration of a concept developed several years ago. However, one never tires of these works as each incorporates new ideas and details.

Heikki Seppä's sculptural objects in iron, sterling, brass and other base metals





appeared to transcend the technical limitations of forming in metal. These pieces, seven in all, maintained a dominating physical presence when viewed together, while I questioned whether individual works were resolved sculptural statements beyond their visual impact and technical complexity.

In addition to the artists who represent the metalsmithing "establishment," a number of other artists made a strong showing. William Fiorini's wonderful damascus *Smoothbore Black Powder Pistol Barrel, Tanto* and *Tsuba* were show stoppers along with his mokume-gane and damascus jewelry. Fiorini is clearly a master metalsmith with particular strength in creating forged objects.

Among the largest works in the show were several closed forms of steel and copper by Dale Wedig. These elegant, green-patinated, covered, bowl-like objects each had small openings at the top from which mokume-gane forms projected. Beautifully crafted, the most successful of these was a piece entitled *Triangular Void.*

Included among some of my personal favorites were two three-dimensional still lifes by Lynn Whitford. One of these was comprised of two raised and patinated bottle forms in copper entitled *Assymetrical Pair* [sic]. Highly fluid and graceful, these bluish-green patinated objects related beautifully to each other. The other, entitled *Owed to Morandi*, was a series of five patinated container forms in brass and copper arranged on a board.

Kenneth Schmidt's work demonstrated his continuing concern with refractory metals in combination with other materials. It consisted of a number of brass, copper, gold-plated and titanium containers and bowl forms. These vessels, both constructed and raised, combined both symbolic and purely formal elements in a carefully composed spatial arrangement. His very sparing incorporation of anodized titanium as accents in his pieces resulted in some of the most effective uses of this material that I have seen.

Clockwise from top left: Kenneth Schmidt, *New Pasch*, copper, brass, titanium; Dale Wedig, *Triangular Void*, copper, mokume-gane; Chuck Evans, *Wall Piece*, anodized aluminum; Lynn Whitford, *Owed to Morandi*, patinated copper and brass; William Fiorini, *Pendant*, sterling silver, mokume-gane, citrine. Photos: courtesy University Graphic and Photographic Services, Penn State University

Sei Mobiletti: Mendini/Sinya

Gallery 91, New York, NY
February 5-April 25, 1987
by Steven Holt

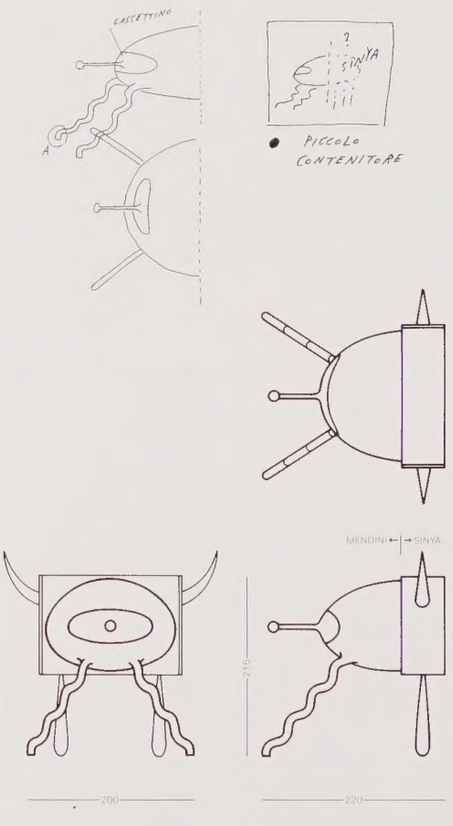
"Sei Mobiletti" was an exhibition of two stories and six pieces. Of the two stories, one revolved around the design process and the other centered on the designed artifact. Of the six pieces, all were domestic objects, and all were flawlessly executed in polished stainless steel. The show—straightforwardly entitled sei mobiletti, which is an Italian phrase meaning six little pieces of furniture-featured a cabinet, a coat rack, a lamp, a stool, a table and a vase.

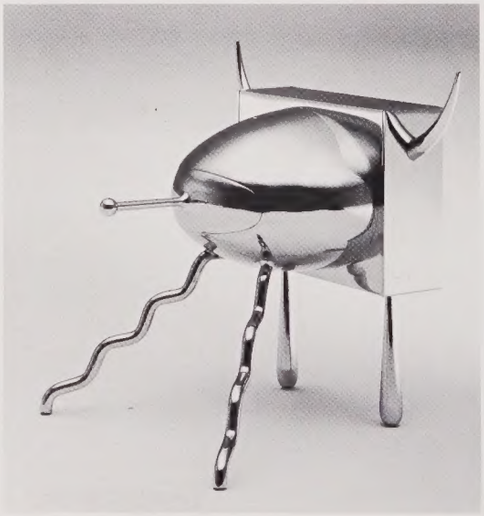
These six pieces of furniture first made for a rich design process story. Each piece was jointly designed by Allesandro Mendini and Sinya Okayama. What made the story more than the usual vignette of collaboration was the fact that Mendini, a reknowned Italian furniture and product designer, worked out of Milan the entire time, while Okayama, a gifted Japanese designer of objects and spaces, worked out of his studio in Osaka. Mendini, the initiator of the project, drew half of each object, and after drawing a dotted line, sent his sketch to Okayama to complete. Okayama finished the drawing and then turned it over to the Daichi Company (of Tokyo) and they worked together to fabricate 33 of each design.

As it turns out, cast stainless steel was chosen over chrome because it presented an unusual challenge, and the quantity of 33 was selected because it was felt that after that point the mold might begin to show signs of fatigue. Happily, the original letters and drawings leading up to this point are preserved in the exhibition's catalog, and this added immeasurably to personal contemplation of the show. We learn, for example, that representative specimens were sent to shows in Milan, New York, Tokyo and Osaka, and that this fill-in-the-blank, connect-the-dotted-lines design approach has roots with the Surrealists who often participated in pass-along-painting exercises.

The appropriation of the Surrealist technique was only an opening gambit by Mendini, a process-based gimmick (in the best sense of the term) that he renamed "reciprocal surprise." It's the objects, then, that must still face critical scrutiny, and here (just as with the design process) "Sei Mobiletti" offers a vivid story. It's not insignificant, for example, that critical scrutiny is figuratively rebuffed by the unlikely forms that the objects have taken, nor is it insignificant that critical scrutiny is literally rebuffed by the high polish that graces each object's surface. The fact that Mendini's and Okayama's works of gesture and imagination were executed in such a permanent material as stainless steel also conspired against a close look.

When the attempt is made to look closely, it is the room that we see, not the actual furniture. Looking at the objects, then, was like seeing the mirages of six products suddenly achieve three-dimensionality; the forms shimmered in the light, the shapes dematerialized and the object simultaneously seemed ephemeral and substantial. In the end, these objects simply weren't like anything else I've seen, not even like the experiments in furniture that have been coming from Ettore Sottsass's Memphis group and Mendini's own Alchymia studio since the late 70s. These objects are much more precious, and far more curious. Mendini has used the term "virtual" to describe this "neo-Modern" work, and in this case the label sticks, for he has taken a quintessential industrial material and transformed it into a half-dozen objects of high esthetic regard.





In the letter proposing the project, Mendini asks of Okayama, "Shall we, for once, treat our design as a game?" Without diminishing the seriousness of the quest, Okayama answers affirmatively, and goes on in his letter in the catalog to talk about how each of the objects will be linked to harmonize or repel each other. Each object, in fact, did both, just as each piece encouraged the onlooker to peer more closely, even as it denied any coherence of image; the sensation was somewhat like that of looking at a new building encased totally in reflective glass. Perhaps these pieces—elegant, untitled and brilliant—were the logical product of a designer such as Mendini who has been so cerebrally quixotic over the years.

The two pieces that stood out the most—the stool and the small cabinet—clearly showed the collision between each designer's gesture; it's almost as if Mendini's famous dotted line was doted upon by Okayama, even as he struggled to bring his own ideas to bear upon the unfinished object. One could guess where one designer stopped and the other started, but that was part of the attraction of these pieces, part of the game. If the dotted line remained, it did so fluidly, for these pieces were crafted more than produced, and sculpted as much as designed. Technically seamless, the objects of "Sei Mobiletti" presented an infinity of perfectly mirrored surfaces to the world, and their success has prompted Mendini and Okayama to issue a statement indicating their interest in designing everything from jewels to urban sculpture "all, only and completely in stainelss steel," which is something, obviously, for all of us to reflect upon.

A 32-page catalog, including the finished pieces as well as initial correspondence between the designers and sketches, is available for $5.50 from gallery 91, 91 Grand Street, New York, NY 10013.

Top: *Stool*, stainless steel, 23x10x17"; **center:** drawings; **left:** *Small Cabinet*, stainless steel, 11x9x10". Photos: courtesy Gallery 91, NYC

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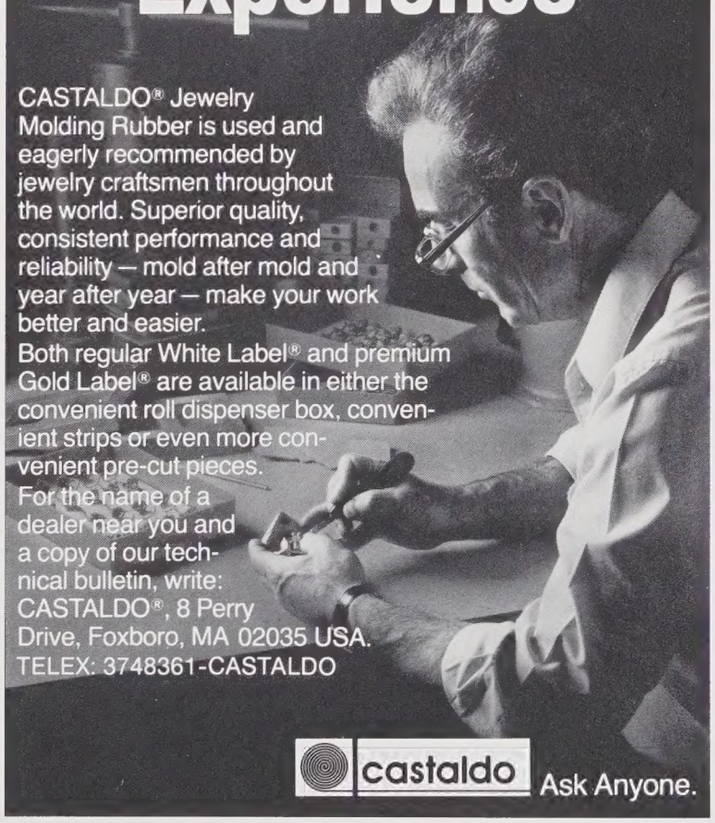

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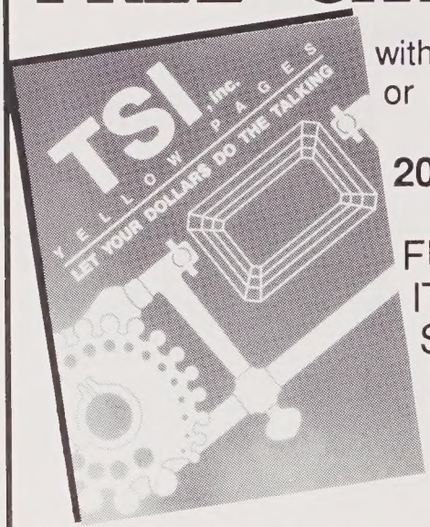

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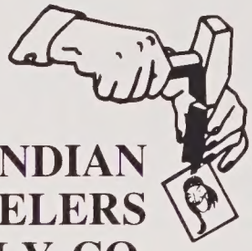

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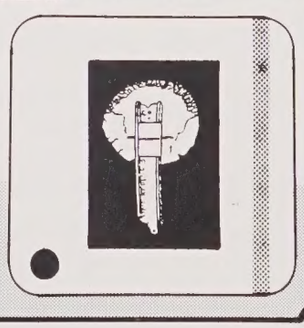

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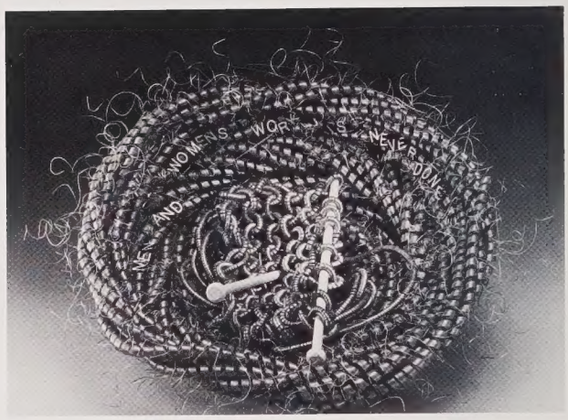

Karen Turnidge, *Men And Women's Work Is Never Done*, steel, wood, plastic, tin, lathe–turned, coiled, knitted, 5 × 14 × 14", 1985. Photo: Suzanne Coles-Ketcham

O what is this
Slithering fog that comes
Rolling off the press
That conceals the gleaming thought
That the artist has expressed?
One would need a
Dictionary to understand it
If not indeed to write it.
Is the object of the writing
The object,
Or is the object
Of the writing
The words.
O bliss when words
And object marry
To the JOY of sounding good!

After I wrote the poem
I liked it.
My pet pique expressed.
Then Noah Webster said to me
(actually rather sharply),
"You squander your inheritance."
And so I thought I'd leave
Critiques to wordsmiths
And merely work on objects.

And I thought about it further
And pondered later still
As I was mopping up
The obfuscating mess on floors
That comes with overflowing
And pictured to myself
The sight of objects
Mopping poetry, I said,
"O turn me off!
I runneth at the mouth.
My poetry is excess steam,
Artistic argonautics."
But thought that once
It might be fun to see
Poems reviewing gleaming objects.

Karen Turnidge is a metal basketmaker and student at Kent State University.

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The Society of North American Goldsmiths (SNAG) was formed in 1970 to promote contemporary gold- and silversmithing. SNAG serves as a forum for the free exchange of ideas in the field.

Technical information, esthetic and educational issues, and other topics of interest to the practitioner and teacher of contemporary metalwork are disseminated by SNAG publications and conferences. Professionals and students, collectors, gallery owners and enthusiasts will all find SNAG interesting and useful. From pure sculpture to production jewelry, SNAG offers information on the entire range of the exciting field of metalsmithing.

Services

Each year, SNAG conducts a conference that attracts jewelers and silversmiths from all over the world. Major figures in the field speak on a multitude of topics. Each conference is held in a different location to allow the widest audience possible access to these lively and stimulating gatherings.

Periodically, SNAG sponsors major exhibitions of contemporary metalwork. In the past, SNAG shows have been mounted at the Renwick Gallery, the St. Paul Museum of Art and the Phoenix Museum of Art. A special exhibition of work by Distinguished Members traveled to major museums in Europe in 1979.

The Society operates a book ordering service, through which important texts on all aspects of the field can be ordered at a reduced price.

SNAG also operates a slide library and rental service, which contains the portfolios of Distinguished Members and other notable metalsmiths. Members can rent or purchase slides at minimal cost.

Publications

Metalsmith is the only magazine in America devoted solely to the metal arts. Prominent jewelers and designers, silversmiths, blacksmiths and sculptors are featured in full-length articles. Process and technique are explored in essays on design and production, materials and equipment. Regular columns by leading authorities discuss the latest gallery shows, newest books and current museum exhibitions.

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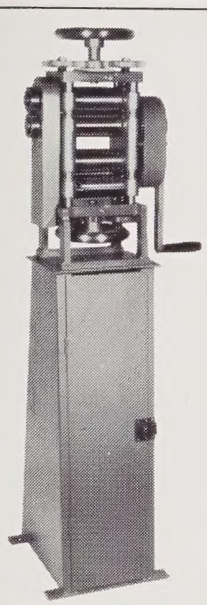
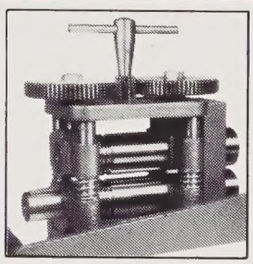
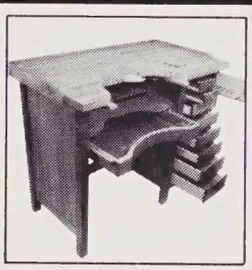


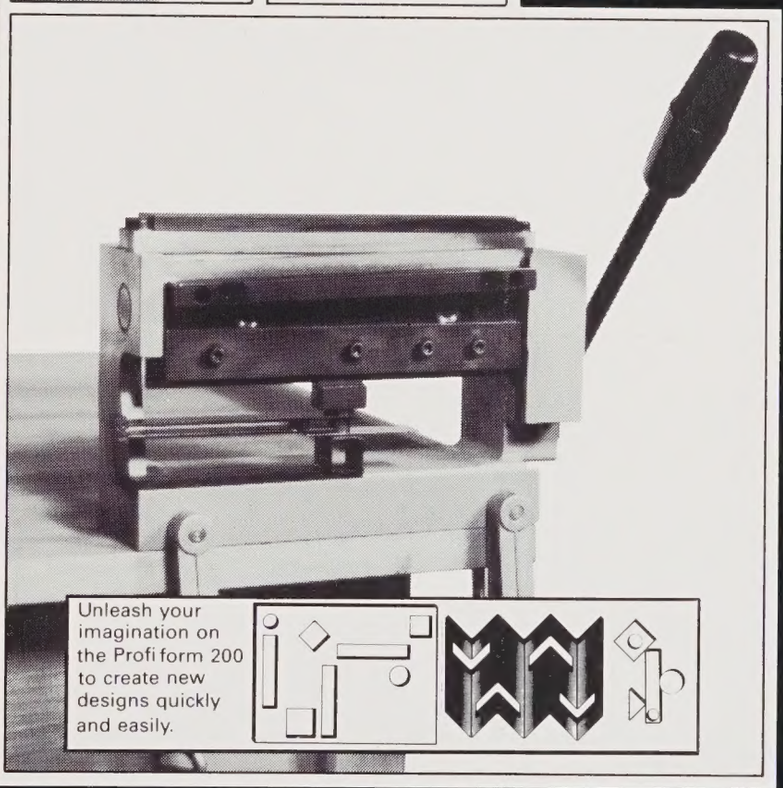




All our rolling mills come with 2 year guarantee against defects in parts and workmanship.

PORFIFORM 200

The Swiss Precision Metal Working Machine That Combines Three Tools In One!



AS A BENCH SHEAR

The Profiform 200 is unsurpassed. The Profiform 7½" shear cuts cleanly and smoothly without leaving a "lip" on the edge of the cut like most shears will.

AS A HOLE CUTTER

The Profiform 200 makes cutting circles and squares a snap. It comes with seven sizes of round punches and five sizes of 4 corner punches. Holes can be punched in the center of sheet metal, not just on the edge as with hammer and die type hole punches.

AS A BENDING BRAKE

The Porfiform 200 makes 90° bends just like larger bending brakes. Use the Profiform 200's bending brake feature to construct all kinds of new shapes and designs.

Unleash your imagination on the Profiform 200 to create new designs quickly and easily.

PORFIFORM 200

Capacity:
1mm (18GA) non ferrious metals
1.5mm Aluminum

Hole Punches:
○ *3.5mm, 4.5, 5.5, 6.5, 8.5, 10.0, 12.0*
□ *6×6mm, 8×8, 10×10, 12×12*
▭ *4×12*

Dimensions:
3" deep, 7" height, 10" width

Price:

Complete with all Hole Punches and Bending Punches	**$950.00**
Only with Bending Punches	**$425.00**
Round Punches	**$ 45.00**
Square Punches	**$ 65.00**

Call or write for our New Catalog including our Rolling Mill brochure and Quality Tool catalog.

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